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PUBLISHED BY MIKATEKO MEDIA ON BEHALF OF DESTINY

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MIKATEKO media

DESTINY
Owner & Publisher Legend Manqele

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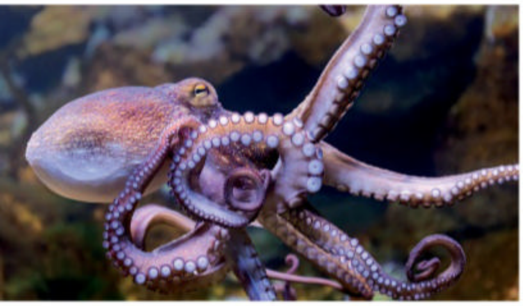

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> “The romantic in me believes in the idea that love is everlasting, that romance is alive.”

Weddings are big business. Not only have they grown in scale, but couples are also putting themselves and their desires foremost and not pandering to the opinions of others. I’m an ardent watcher of reality shows, and weddings are top of my list. Indian wedding shows, Greek wedding shows, *Our Perfect Wedding*, African weddings, shows about wedding planners and how they execute weddings ranging from tiny to stratospheric budgets, cross-cultural weddings, blended weddings, cross-ocean weddings. Shows where the bride knows nothing and the groom decides, with his buddies, on everything about the wedding from the bridal dress to the food – sometimes with disastrous effects. Shows like *Say Yes to the Dress* where the bride walks in with an entourage who bicker about what suits the bride best, and then the final viewing where everyone cries, and the price of the dress is announced. I guess it’s the romantic in me. The idea that love is everlasting, that romance is alive. There’s a price tag though that many of us can only dream about. And we dab the tears from our eyes, and we delve deep inside ourselves to find the spark that was so alive in us on that day.

Love is magic.

Ingrid Jones

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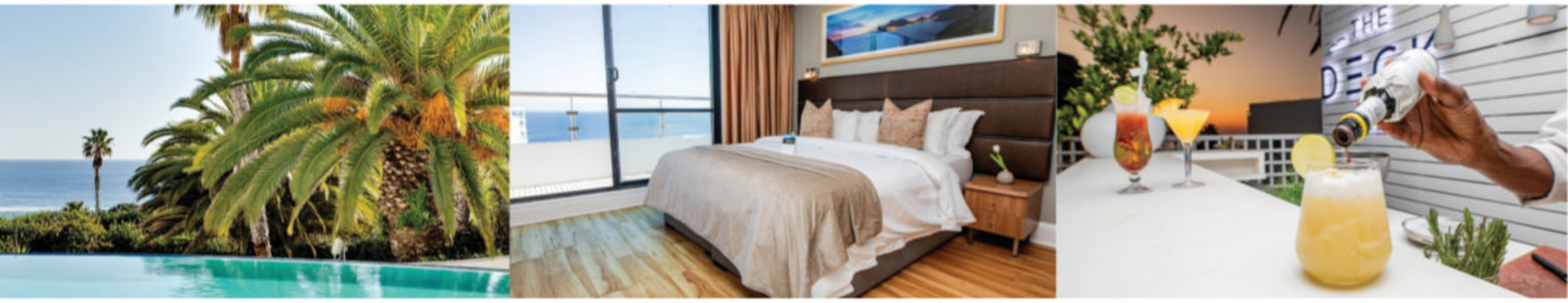

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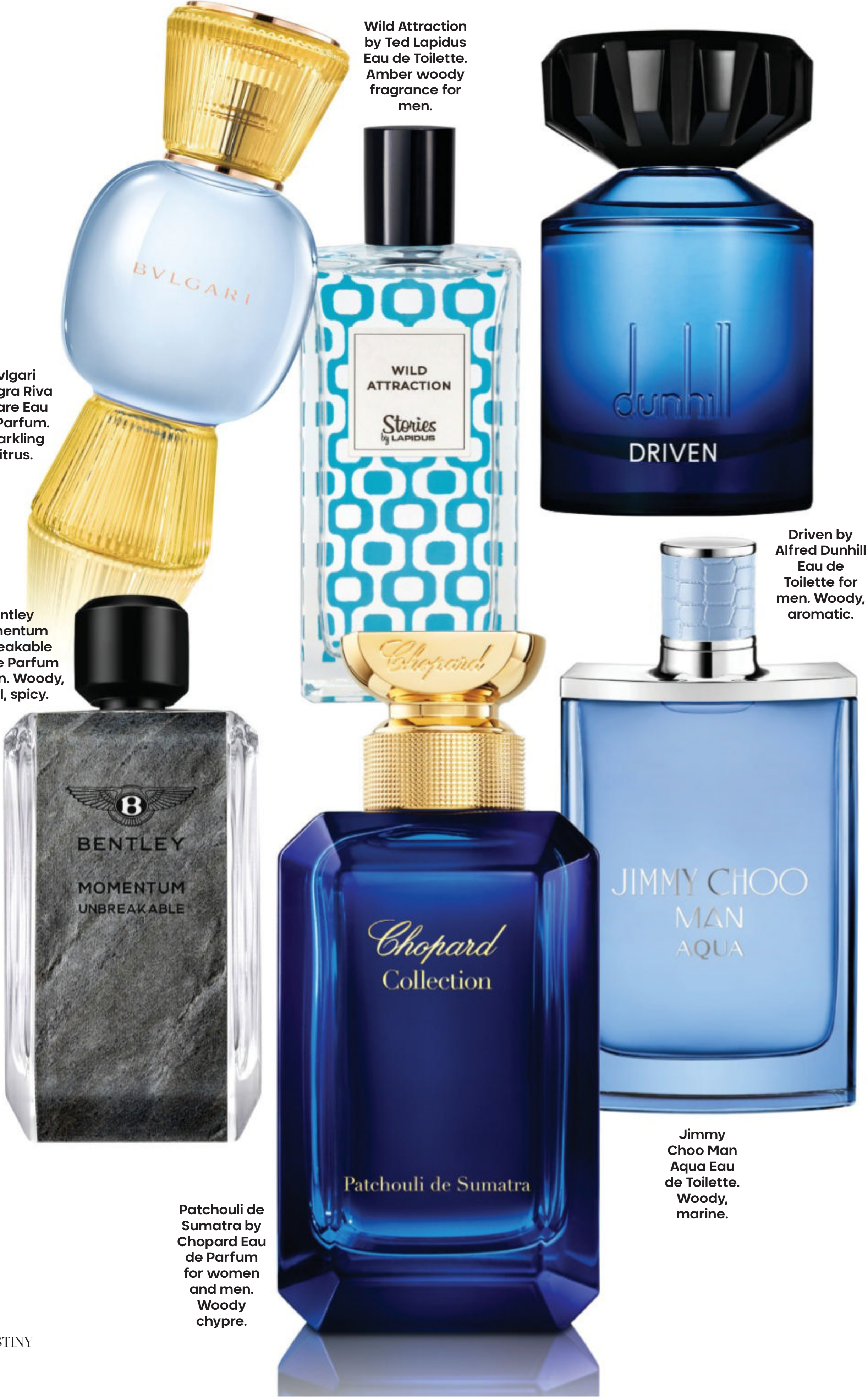
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Stories by LAPIDUS
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Collection
Patchouli de Sumatra
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MAN
AQUA

Wild Attraction by Ted Lapidus Eau de Toilette. Amber woody fragrance for men.

Bvlgari Allegra Riva Solare Eau de Parfum. Sparkling citrus.

Driven by Alfred Dunhill Eau de Toilette for men. Woody, aromatic.

Bentley Momentum Unbreakable Eau de Parfum for men. Woody, floral, spicy.

Jimmy Choo Man Aqua Eau de Toilette. Woody, marine.

Patchouli de Sumatra by Chopard Eau de Parfum for women and men. Woody chypre.

Signature SCENTS

What makes a fragrance a must-have? Is it a memory evocative of a person or experience, or is it simply about how it makes you feel? We help you understand the top notes, legs and heart in this liquid luxury, whose indulgence closely compares with wine.

TEXT: DEBBIE HATHWAY

GUESS
UOMO
EST.1981

Understanding fragrance can be as complicated and confusing as selecting your favourite wine. Much of the terminology is the same, and there's the olfactory influence of the nose. Experts say buy what you like. Also, ignore the scent descriptions, especially if you have no idea what chypre musk or oud is, for example. If you get a headache or start sneezing with any fragrance, it's not for you.

The best advice is to follow your instincts and trust your nose before committing to a signature scent. Start with musky (think clean laundry) and aqueous scents, which are lighter, then progress to citrus, fruity florals and heavier woods. Try, at most, three at a time to give each one time to shine.

Spray it on areas that aren't frequently exposed to soap suds, like the top of your hands, wrists, or elbow crook. Have a good sniff every so often to see how it evolves over four hours and responds to your body chemistry. That's because a top note gives you the first impression of the fragrance and lingers for about 20 minutes. The heart lasts longer, up to the four-hour mark.

Why are some more pricey than others? Fragrances in the high-end category tend to last longer, having the complexity of heart and dry down, while less costly options often have top notes that are initially overpowering.

Guess Uomo Eau de Toilette for men. Earthy and sensual.

PARIS - PARIS
CHANEL
PARIS

PARIS-PARIS Eau de Toilette by Chanel. Woody, floral.

Baiser Volé Eau de Parfum by Cartier. Floral.

Montblanc Legend Red Eau de Parfum for men. Woody, fruity.

Lesedi La Rona VI by Graff Eau de Parfum. Woody, oriental.

TERRE D'HERMÈS
EAU GIVRÉE

Terre d'Hermès Eau Givrée Eau de Parfum for men. Citrusy, vigorous.

Bvlgari Allegra Fiori D'Amore Eau de Parfum. Floral, fresh, velvety, fruity.

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by David Green

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Created in 1990, L'Absolu Rouge by Lancôme is an iconic lipstick that transcends the passage of time. Today, it remains instantly recognisable by the golden rose emblazoned on the cap, a seal of Lancôme's love for femininity, and that addictive click mechanism known and adored by women all over the world.

Having reinvented itself through the decades, this time around the iconic lipstick is now available as L'Absolu Rouge Cream and Drama Matte, enriched with ingredients to deliver all-day luscious comfort in new signature lip shades. D

Images: Supplied

IGNITE YOUR LIPS

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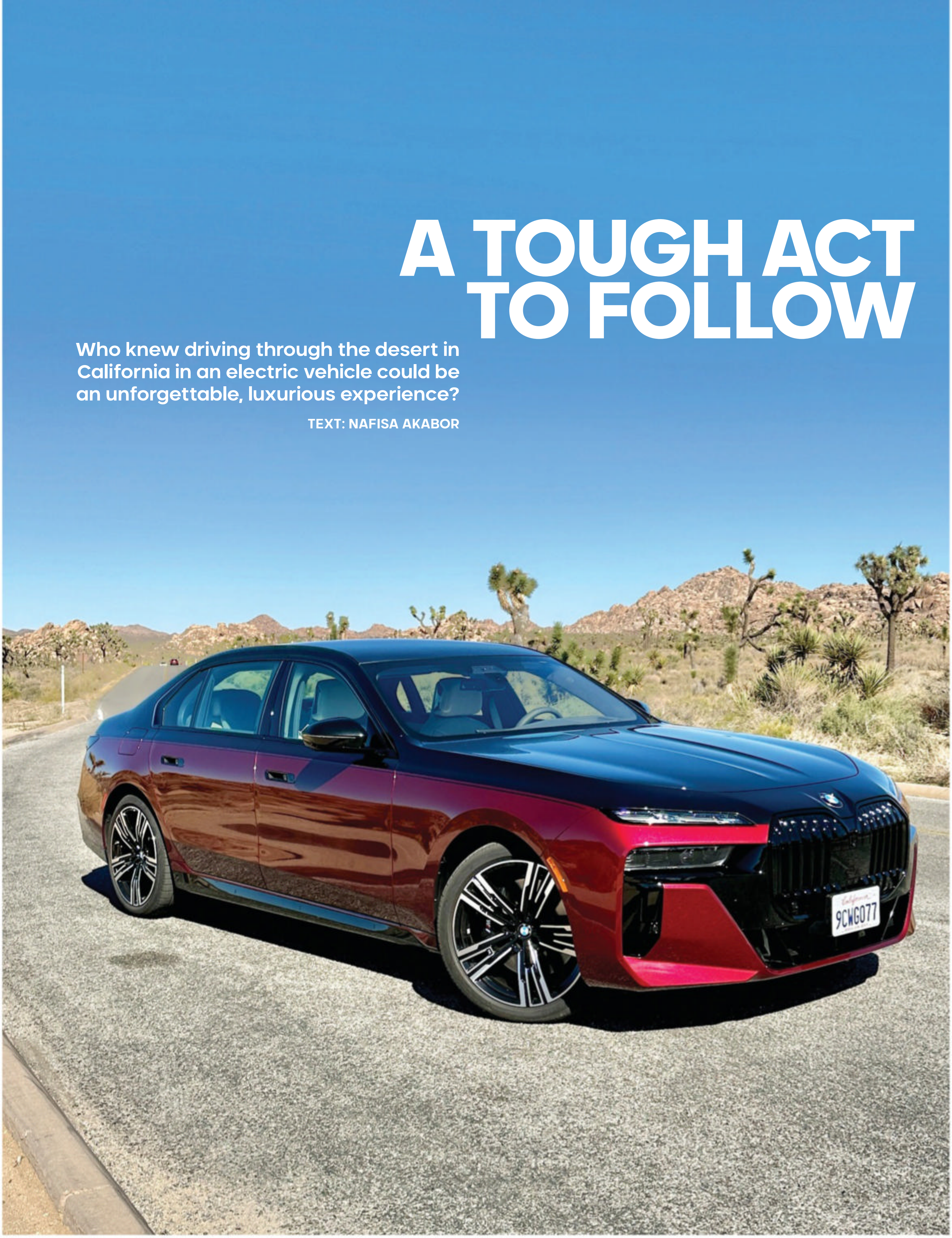
260 km/h
200
150
120
90
60
30
0
0
km/h
ePower % 100
75
50
25
OFF 0
92 %
8:28
+13.5 °C
471 km
20.0 °C
SET
MODE

The BMW i7 features a large Curved Display to enhance the driving experience.

A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW

Who knew driving through the desert in California in an electric vehicle could be an unforgettable, luxurious experience?

TEXT: NAFISA AKABOR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The BMW "i" logo differentiates it from its petrol counterpart.

The BMW 7 Series sets the bar high when it comes to luxury sedans, which now includes its first electric i7 flagship in the range. The innovation found on the luxury sedan is a digital experience I have not seen before. From its 31-inch screen to automatic doors, AR overlays on the camera, touchscreen door panels and voice commands in natural language, I was amazed this was packed into an electric car.

Katharina Mödl, Project Manager for the user interface for BMW's Operating System 8, tells DESTINY that the 7 Series features the latest technology standard, and the biggest highlight is its very distinguished rear seat entertainment.

The 31" 8K display is available on-demand.
Right: An iPhone doubles up as the car key.

"We offer a real cinema experience to our customers – it's like a cinema on wheels. We have a big BMW theatre screen, built-in [Amazon] Fire TV and touch commands on the door, which makes us unique by offering a fully digital experience in the second-row seats. Our first-row seat has one design principle: driver orientation to focus on driving and offer maximum support and assistance," says Mödl. "It is why we brought the augmented view to the instrument cluster – for navigation and assisted driving – and it's in the direct line of sight."

> Starting up to silence and driving quietly is something that grows on you. It helps take you in and appreciate the surroundings, in this case, through the Palm Desert.

INTRODUCING THE ELECTRIC i7

The location for the international 7 Series launch was the Ritz-Carlton Rancho Mirage in Palm Springs, perched atop a cliff on the Santa Rosa Mountains. The restaurant provided stunning views of the valley below. A luxurious hotel befitting the luxury sedan and everything it stands for.

Its striking design and presence come from the illuminated kidney grille and split headlights featuring Swarovski crystals on the daytime running lights on top. The rear lights feature a 3D-like geometric pattern, and finishes include two-tone shades, like you see on a Rolls-Royce.

When I saw the i7 next to its petrol counterparts, I struggled to tell it apart. But there's a small BMW "i" logo on the grille and the round logo on the bonnet has a blue ring around it to indicate its electric.

The car is large at 5.4 metres in length, with plenty of leg- and headroom. When you get in, you notice the crystal finishes carried through, with a mix of textures like leather, metal and cloth. Hard to miss is BMW's massive Curved Display from the driver's seat covering two-thirds of the dashboard, which houses the instrument cluster and infotainment screen.

The BMW 7 Series features Swarovski crystals on the daytime running lights.

The car runs on BMW's latest version of operating system 8 and like a smartphone, supports touch, voice or gesture controls. It introduces a YouTube app that you can use when the car is stationary, such as when you're at a charging station.

When you climb into the back, it's a first-class lounge. You can relax with your feet up and enjoy the 31-inch 8K theatre screen with Fire TV that folds up when not in use. The panoramic glass roof has dynamic LED lights you can adjust to suit the mood. The 5.5-inch displays on the door let you control functions such as lights, blinds, music, seating and climate. Every comfort is available through touch or voice command.

PUTTING THE i7 TO THE TEST

I was mulling between getting behind the wheel or being driven around on day one, but instinctively hopped into the driver's seat. After being handed iPhone car keys, we headed out in pairs from the Ritz and hit the streets of California in no time. Over the next two days, we drove the i7 and 7 Series from a choice of multiple routes.

We were fortunate to experience sunny weather towards the end of 2022, while the rest of the country faced colder climates. But this is what makes California so inviting. The preloaded routes allowed us to experience a bit of everything – to coast on the interstate highways, sit in start stop traffic, go through mountain passes, and recuperate on the downhills.

I thoroughly enjoyed the drive, especially with the augmented reality overlays on the navigation so I wouldn't get lost while navigating a left-hand drive on the right side of the road.

As with any EV, starting up to silence and driving quietly is something that grows on you. It helps take in and appreciate the surroundings, in this case, through the Palm Desert. The cabin is quiet, and the ride is smooth no matter the conditions outside, thanks to the latest driving technologies on the 7.

On my drive, I accidentally closed the back blinds and in a panicked state, all I could muster was, "Hey BMW, open the back blinds" and within seconds the intelligent assistant took care of everything. I never truly appreciated voice assistants in a car until this point.

I also tested the My Modes presets and with a touch of a button, I could get a massage, switch to ambient lighting with digital art over the display or opt for a sportier ride, complete with Iconic Sounds created by Academy Award-winning music composer, Hans Zimmer, exclusively for BMW EVs.

And on one of the days, we went through the Joshua Tree National Park and pulled over at a viewpoint. The rugged view of rock formations and desert landscapes characterised by twisted, bristled Joshua trees was incredible. I simply had to snap photos of the two-tone finish on the 7, which was quite contrasting to the landscape.

PERFORMANCE AND RANGE

The i7 xDrive60 is a beast of an EV with 400kW of power and 745Nm of torque. It has a large 101.7kWh battery that can give you up to 635km of range, depending on how you drive.

For such a large vehicle, take-off was powerful and smooth – it can accelerate from 0 to 100km/h in a mere 4.7 seconds. At no point during the uphill climb through the mountain did I experience range anxiety or the need to stop at a charging station.

The i7 was extremely fun to drive and at one point on the interstate highway, we could legally remove our hands from the steering wheel. Who knew driving through the desert in California in an EV would be such a luxurious yet unforgettable experience?

BMW raises the bar in luxury EVs and the i7 is going to be a tough act to follow.

***The electric i7 is currently available at R2.82 million.**

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POWERING UP...
TOGETHER

Dr Bahle Zondo and Nomfundo Mcoyi's lavish destination wedding recently broke the internet, and with good reason. We set out to get to know the power couple behind South Africa's very own fairy tale wedding.

TEXT: LIESL FRANKSON

If you look up the term power couple online, you'll find many definitions. The Urban Dictionary defines power couple as "a couple where each of the people are powerful and influential in their own right". However, further down in the definition is a sentence that exemplifies the relationship between Dr Bahle Zondo and Nomfundo Mcoyi: "…they encourage goodness in the world and make it a better place by being together".

For Bahle, President of Amahle Benefits Scheme and Founder and Chair of the Bahle Zondo Foundation, the couple's union was long overdue according to those in his community. "My community is looking forward to the traditional wedding coming up in September. They've been waiting patiently for me to bring someone home and I think they are going to love my wife," he says with a broad smile.

While Nomfundo and Bahle wed in a lavish multimillion rand white wedding on the island of Bali earlier this year, it's the two-day traditional wedding that Bahle is most excited about. "It's an opportunity for me to introduce my queen to my community. I think they have been waiting on this moment with bated breath because they want to see what kind of man I will be once she steps into the picture. Little do they know that her generosity and love for community far exceeds mine."

Born in Hammarsdale, KwaZulu-Natal, Nomfundo, Founder and Group Chief Executive of Icebolethu Group, credits much of her success to her upbringing. "I grew up in Richmond, which is a rural area just outside of Ixopo in KwaZulu-Natal. That's where I got the foundation for most of the things that make me who I am today.

"I grew up in a family that is known for business. Both my grandfathers were renowned businesspeople, so business is something that's in my genes," she explains. Armed with a national diploma in education, Nomfundo began her career as an educator in 1996 and continued until 2009 when she decided to pursue her dream of becoming an entrepreneur.

Inspired by the need for a reputable funeral service provider in black communities, Nomfundo founded Icebolethu in Hammarsdale. "As a company, we come from humble beginnings. We started with a single branch and five employees. We didn't even have a mortuary or a hearse."

Today, the brand is a force to be reckoned with within the funeral services industry. "We have over 100 customer service branches, two call centres, a fleet centre and admin offices across KZN and Gauteng. As a brand, we have 1 700 employees, and we are looking to grow that number to 2 500 by the end of the year. To go from five employees to 1 700 in 14 years is something I am incredibly proud of, especially as a woman in this industry."

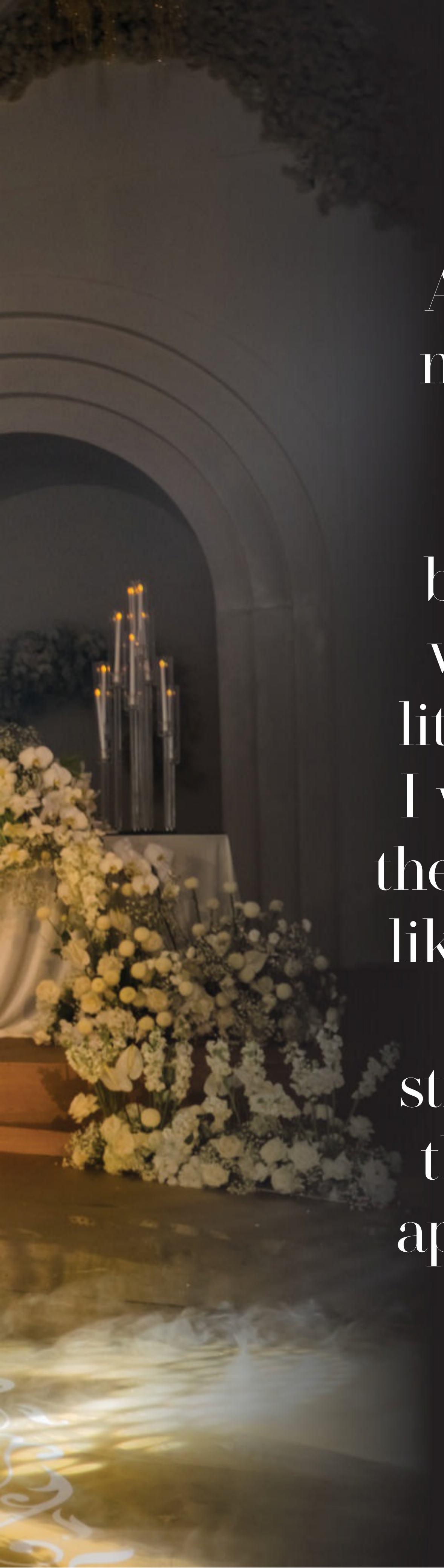
Nomfundo recalls the challenges she had to face coming into the funeral services industry as a woman. "I remember when I joined the South African Funeral Practitioners Association, I was the only woman on the committee as one of the executive members for our region. It was so difficult. The men would completely ignore me in meetings. I would try to talk, and they would continue as if I was not in the room. It was the worst feeling in the world because it was as if they didn't take me seriously.

"I'm happy about it though because as painful as it was, it made me strong. They would ridicule and criticise some of the bolder choices I made with my business, but little did they know that I was setting trends and the decisions that seemed like weaknesses to them, became our greatest strengths. Those are the things that have set us apart from others in the industry."

While the core business of Icebolethu is funeral services and burials, the group has moved towards showing itself as a lifestyle brand. Other companies under the group's umbrella include Icebolethu Funerals UK, Icebolethu Catering, Icebolethu Security, Icebolethu Tombstones, Icebolethu Properties, Icebolethu Group Academy and Icebolethu Memorials.

Growing the brand is an important part of Nomfundo's plans but giving back is equally important. Four years ago, Icebolethu Foundation adopted 50 girls between the ages of 13 and 21 years to mentor and nurture through a programme call Rhoda Girls. The total number of girls that have passed through the programme is over 100 now and some have graduated from tertiary institutions and are employed. Through this initiative, the foundation offers financial aid for education as well as access to courses, camps and mentorship programmes for the girls.

Despite the earlier challenges in her career, Nomfundo has managed to create a success story for herself and her community. Her early days on the committee of the South African Funeral Practitioners Association not only inspired her to continue breaking boundaries in her industry, but they brought her face-to-face with a man who



> As painful as it was, it made me strong. They would ridicule and criticise some of the bolder choices I made with my business, but little did they know that I was setting trends and the decisions that seemed like weaknesses to them, became our greatest strengths. Those are the things that have set us apart from others in the industry.

could match her energy.

"A school inspector once told me that I would never amount to anything," says Bahle. "On some level I believed him, but on another I was determined to do everything in my power to prove him wrong."

Resilience and persistence are two traits that Bahle and Nomfundo have in common because just like his wife, Bahle has achieved great things despite many unfavourable encounters along the way.

"I grew up in the rural area of Msinga in KwaZulu-Natal and my journey as an entrepreneur began as early as grade 4 when I started selling peanuts. By grade 9, I was working on a farm, driving tractors, but the desire to create something for myself was always there." Bahle had to quit school after grade 10 but as fate would have it, his helpful nature would secure him an opportunity with a company that encouraged him to complete his education and study further.

After several years of service to the insurance industry through African Life, his passion for solving real-world problems saw him start his own funeral insurance scheme in 2007. "I grew up being a member of a burial society in our area in Msinga but it was only for men. The function of those schemes was to insure all the men working away from home for the sole purpose of repatriating their bodies back to KZN. After I joined the insurance industry and learnt that women could also be insured, I set out to tap into that market in our communities and showed the elders and other scheme founders there was value in insuring everyone."

Today, the Amahle Benefits Scheme has over half a million clients and 85 branches in nine provinces, and became the very first funeral scheme of its kind to offer bursaries to students and skills development to women.

Amahle is just one of Bahle's many business interests, but it is through his passion for farming and aviation that he is really looking to make a meaningful impact within his community. "One aspect of my business is committed to reviving farming in rural areas. Most people abandoned the land we used to farm when I was growing up, especially after the government came forward with social grants, but as we know, social grants are not enough. I wanted to show people that you can still be a small or emerging farmer while receiving a grant and make money to sustain yourself, and that is what I do."

Bahle says many of his family members were against the idea of him going from office life in the city back into agriculture, but he was not deterred. "Many people couldn't understand why I was doing what seemed like going backwards. They would say I worked so hard to get educated and make a life for myself but now I was back in boots in the garden, but I knew what I was trying to do."

His actions created a renewed interest in farming, and he hasn't stopped there. When he is not on the ground focused on farming and his funeral services business, Bahle is flying high as a qualified pilot. "My passion for aviation comes from a place of pain. Growing up, we associated helicopters and aircrafts with the police who would conduct raids on our communities harassing our parents and grandparents searching for guns we never had. As soon as I was able to, I chose to turn the story around by learning how to fly. Again, I was told that flying wasn't for everyone, and my instructor told me that he didn't think I could do it, but I did."

This newfound passion saw him secure a tenure with British Airways in Amsterdam as a commercial pilot. Today, Bahle owns and pilots his own fleet of helicopters, which he not only uses for business but also to motivate youth in his community to help turn their stories around, just as he did.

In addition, he has made bursaries available to people interested in agriculture, maths, physics, business and aviation. "I've spent over R36 million educating over 600 students in different universities."

Looking ahead, both Bahle and Nomfundo are excited about what the future holds, and I can't help but share in that excitement. If their individual success stories and their wedding, which trended on social media for days on end, are anything to go by, it's clear that this couple believes in going big or going home.

"We haven't even scratched the surface of what we can achieve in our individual capacities and as a couple, the journey is only beginning. The future is bright," concludes Bahle. D

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Make Up: **Embelesh**
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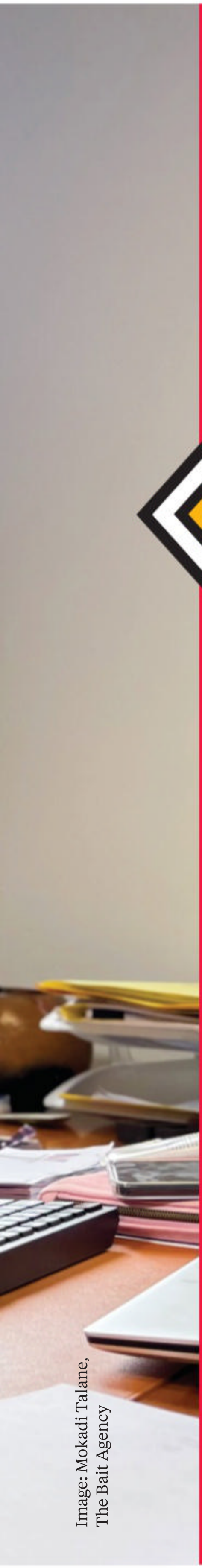

Image: Mokadi Talane, The Bait Agency

TEXT: GEZZY S SIBISI

TURNING THE BOYS' CLUB INTO A WOMEN'S DOMAIN

Lerato Mathopo of DM5 Incorporated spearheads transformation in the legal profession.

Ever since the announcement of the Women Legal Practitioners Act 7 of 1923, South African women have made great strides in the legal profession. It was in 1923 when the first white South African woman was admitted as an attorney. The first coloured woman was recognised in 1962, while the first black woman was accepted in 1967. Today, it is estimated that women of all races make up 40% of practising legal practitioners, but only a few have managed to successfully operate their own legal practices.

DM5 is a 100% black woman-owned law firm specialising in commercial corporate law. The business recruits 90% black employees, of which 70% are black women. “In April next year, the business will be celebrating 15 years,” boasts co-director, Lerato Mathopo.

Mathopo refers to the legal profession as a “boys’ club”. The policies are there, however, the culture and attitudes within the legal profession continue to favour men, she insists.

“Sometimes when I walk into a boardroom, people assume I am the secretary or a junior to a male colleague, and not the boss. There is also the issue of subtle racism in our society. Being a female is hard, but being a female black boss is twice as hard,” she highlights.

> {Women were at the bottom of the food chain while men just automatically moved up the social ladder regardless of their age or contribution.

As the head of Dispute Resolution and Investigation at DM5, her experience includes dispute resolution and corporate commercial law. Mathopo affirms that she has found her own definition of what it means to be a black female law professional without wanting to be like a man.

“As a woman, there is an expectation from others that you need to be sympathetic and understanding, even when things don’t make sense or are harmful to the business, but I needed to find a middle ground between being a female and being a good businesswoman,” she shares.

As a mother of three girls, she understands the dynamics of being a career-driven working mom. An attorney employee who is also a mother had to come into the office on a Saturday but was stressed because she could not find someone to look after her child. “I told her to bring the child along, and I will take care of her while we work. For four hours, I sat down on the floor with a bunch of crayons, drawing with the little one, while we drafted agreements for the client.

“At the end of the day, we met our deadline and produced good-quality work and the client was happy. As women, we tend to feel guilty about not being there for our little ones all the time, and we shouldn’t. We just need to give priority where it’s needed most. We also need to train our partners and children so that we can be supported.”

Growing up in Dannhauser, KwaZulu-Natal, Mathopo is a middle child, with an older sister and a younger brother who is deceased. “As a kid, I was a tomboy and I still am. My parents were living and working in Johannesburg and, as a result, I grew up living with my grandparents and relatives.”

Her family is filled with teachers, but even as a young student, she does not recall aspiring to follow that route. “According to my mother, the first time I said I wanted to be a lawyer was when I was six years old. I don’t recall why I wanted to at that time, but looking back, I did not like how the women around me were treated,” she recalls.

“Women were at the bottom of the food chain while men just automatically moved up the social ladder regardless of their age or contribution. This was standard and because I knew that I could not become a man, getting an education was something I thought would give me standing in society.”

Nowadays, when Mathopo goes home to KZN, she receives mixed reception from her community. “To some, I am just a woman. To others, I am one step up – an educated woman. But it is the young girls who keep me motivated because they look up to me.”

> "
>
> The first time I said I wanted to be a lawyer was when I was six years old. I don't recall why I wanted to at that time, but looking back, I did not like how the women around me were treated.
>
> "

> "When we started out, some people thought we were a social club or a society. It took a long time for people to take us seriously. But here we are still standing."

After Mathopo completed her studies at Dlangezwa High School in Empangeni, she moved to Johannesburg where she completed her BProc at Vista University, now known as the University of Johannesburg, Soweto Campus. She completed her LLB at the University of South Africa and after finishing her articles at a small firm in Parktown North, Mathopo took part in a lawyer exchange programme undertaken by the Cyrus R. Vance Center in New York, USA. Mathopo is a fellow of the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice of The New York City Bar. "Being in an American law firm was a shock to my system," confesses Mathopo. "I was used to working in a small group of not more than 10, and there I was in a company of more than 1 000 law professionals! It was good exposure and eye-opening. Law in that part of the world is a postgraduate, which means you could be a doctor or an engineer and then go into law. Here at home, you can finish high school and be an undergraduate."

Mathopo was one of six candidates selected from South Africa, together with Vele Mulangaphuma, her co-director at DM5. They were roommates while working in New York.

"We would talk about diluting the boardrooms and bringing more black females into the field. We knew that we wanted to start DM5 someday."

Mathopo has 21 years of post-admission experience and has worked in local and international law firms. She is one of five women who established DM5.

"I remember when we started out, some people thought we were a social club or a society, as they are called," she chuckles. "They made jokes about catfights. It took a long time for people to take us seriously. But here we are still standing."

As black women continue to be marginalised in the workplace, Mathopo and her team try to spearhead transformation in their profession. "We always urge our female candidates to not just push boundaries but to kick them down."

"When we started out, we hired strictly women, including female IT personnel and even a female driver. People thought we were trying to be feminists, but we knew that hiring a female driver was more of an extension of us – we could trust her to fetch our kids, buy nappies, and do other errands that a male driver would not always manage to do."

Some of Mathopo's career highlights include being involved in cross-border work in various African countries and internationally, and producing black corporate lawyers over the years.

"When most people think about law, they think about black gowns and court cases. We expose our trainees and future employees to litigation and other parts of the law that do not require them to wear a gown or go to court."

DM5 takes interns for a two-week programme during holidays and also has a two-year programme for Candidate Attorneys.

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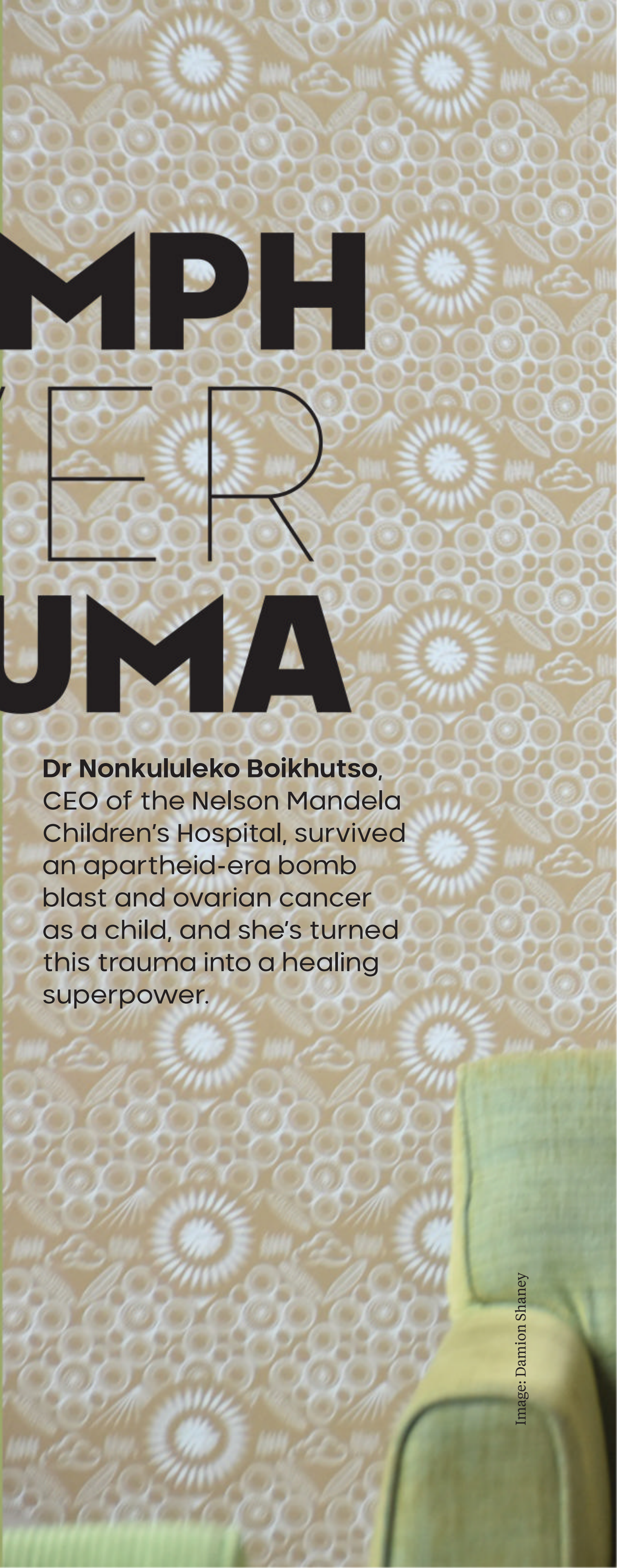

Image: Damion Shaney

Dr Nonkululeko Boikhutso, CEO of the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital, survived an apartheid-era bomb blast and ovarian cancer as a child, and she's turned this trauma into a healing superpower.

The Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital (NMCH), one of only five dedicated children's hospitals across the African continent, has celebrated five years of specialised paediatric care. Children from all over Southern Africa can access affordable medical care, made tangible through the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital Fund, government support and donor funding.

With the largest critical care complex in the SADC region, the hospital has become known for its medical disciplines in cardiovascular treatment, neurosurgical procedures, and pre-and post-liver transplant dialysis. But what further sets it apart is its CEO's intimate knowledge of childhood illness and trauma.

"I've always wanted to heal children," says Dr Nonkululeko Boikhutso.

Caught up in an apartheid-era bomb blast at the age of nine and later fighting a hard battle with ovarian cancer at only 14 years old, Dr Boikhutso believes the "disconnected care" she received as a child cemented her interest in medicine and healing people. "What children need most is the ability to be children, especially when they are sick," she says.

Recalling vividly the day the limpet mine went off in downtown Joburg in 1991, she describes how it felt like she "was swimming in glass water", while surrounded by chaos and confusion. "There was a lot of shouting, and I didn't know where my mother was."

She had just started a scholarship at a private school and was en route home to Soweto with her mother when the blast hit. "My mom was more burnt than me; it was so bad I could hardly look at her for weeks," Dr Boikhutso recalls.

The army questioned the victims before they were transferred to Hillbrow Hospital. It was a harrowing day spent at the trauma unit feeling overlooked and unengaged. Yet, remarkably, she and her mother recovered from that fateful blast with little scarring. Then at age 11, she developed a lump in her abdomen. Over three years, a misdiagnosis of her ovarian cancer echoed this sentiment of being a sick child in a healthcare system designed for adults.

One of the GPs she saw asked her if she was pregnant, as the lump had gotten so big. "Unless I'm Mother Mary, no, I'm not pregnant. I am not sexually active," she told the doctor.

It's a remark that defined the sass and determination of this young girl, who now aged 41, heads up the state-of-the-art paediatric hospital in Gauteng that provides a caring, child- and family-centred environment, with an emphasis on being caring.

> A misdiagnosis of her ovarian cancer echoed this sentiment of being a sick child in a healthcare system designed for adults.

"You're 14, and the last thing you're thinking about is being sick, let alone people talking about you having or not being able to have children."

At the time, her only point of reference for cancer was the movie *Forever Young* with Julia Roberts, in which the patient dies. "I knew nothing about cancer at that time except this movie. During my diagnosis, I overheard doctors talking and semi-understood what they were saying. It all felt like a dream. But then reality bites once you start your chemo treatment."

Dr Boikhutso acknowledges that government hospitals can get very busy, so children hardly ever get engaged. "I was smart enough to understand what they were talking about, but nobody bothered to explain what was happening to me."

She had to overhear discussions about how rare and serious her condition was and how they would try to preserve her ovaries so she could still have children one day.

"All these doctors examined me and felt this mass in my stomach, but nobody asked permission to bring students to learn about my condition. I felt like I was on show, yet completely ignored even though this was my own body."

Dr Boikhutso says this experience cemented her resolve to be a different type of doctor. "I wanted to have an institution with core values to involve the families, to involve the children in their treatment process and consider the long-term impact and counselling they might require.

"When you are chronically ill, many things are affected, from your schooling to your social networks. So, at NMCH, we aim to support chronically ill children and how they can live better lives after what they've been through.

"I survived my experiences, and I'm happy I went through them. That's why I am so passionate about this hospital. I believe we are perfectly positioned to deal with children's issues and what they must go through pre-hospital, while in hospital, and afterwards."

Fortunately, today Dr Boikhutso has a family of her own. "It was a miracle to have two children of my own and a stepchild, and now I have three of the best. Thank God I'm in remission. I'm married to a wonderful husband and as semi-normal a person as I can be," she adds, laughing.

"My prayerful mom gave me a strong spiritual grounding to keep going during this challenging period in the hospital. I got a little scripture in the Psalms, 118 verse 18, 'I will not die but declare what the Lord has done', and that was my hope."

She says the church's social structure supported her mother as a single parent during her illness, giving her a deeper insight into what families need and go through when a child is chronically sick. "Many don't think about how these parents have to travel from the townships to the hospital or how the child has to cope with schoolwork while being sick," she adds.

This backdrop has shaped her advocacy work with CHOC Childhood Cancer Foundation South Africa, which provides free, comprehensive support to families of children with cancer and life-threatening blood disorders. As the first childhood cancer survivor invited to sit on the CHOC Board, she brings her real-life experience of having lived through the worst of being a chronically ill paediatric patient.

"I'm there to raise awareness about children like me."

Her work also draws inspiration from Sister Sadie, a nurse who was head of the unit of the cancer clinic she attended.

"When I arrived at the chemo unit, Sister Sadie made my visits so much more pleasant. She'd smile and make me feel like a human, not just a number. She knew my name, my surname, and it made a difference."

Dr Boikhutso, who started as the clinical director at NMCH shortly after it opened, says this is the same approach she and her team take at the hospital. "I started as one of them and then suddenly, I was their leader. I must commend them as we rallied and supported each other. Things are never perfect but having

> What children need most is the ability to be children, especially when they are sick.

a good support structure helps your professional and personal life.

"It's a constant balancing act," she admits, "but I've learnt not to be so hard on myself. We can't have it all. My mother always said, 'no is an anointed word'. So, what I can drop, or the ball I can catch later, I do it. Forgive yourself. Cut yourself some slack. But you must have what is important to you, so prioritise that," she adds.

Ultimately, the most significant thing keeping Dr Boikhutso up at night is getting the hospital fully operational and at a level of Red Cross, but in Johannesburg.

Currently, NMCH operates at only 50% capacity, but its five-year focus is on getting funding and support to ensure full utilisation of all facilities. While government supports the hospital with R299 million per annum, it requires double that to run at full capacity, she says, as the hospital could only raise R65 million independently in the last year alone.

"We're a 200-bed hospital operating half of those beds because we just don't have the money to fully open. In the next five years, we want to ensure every area in the hospital is functional and being used."

Setting the benchmark for training and research is another core focus, adds Dr Boikhutso, as the hospital has started building relationships for training programmes with Wits, the University of Pretoria and the University of Johannesburg.

"It is important as a community to safeguard and protect this hospital that protects our children. This is not only a Madiba legacy; it's about the children. There's a lot to be negative about these days, but as South Africans, we can be proud of this hospital and what it's doing for our children."

To find out more or to support the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital, contact info@nmcf.co.za or nelsonmandelachildrensfund.com

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

Women's sports are still facing some significant challenges, but athletes such as Ayabonga Khaka, Laura Wolvaardt, Buhle Ngobese, Refilwe Mogorosi, Remofilwe Moeketsi and Andisiwe Skeyi continue to power through.

TEXT: SBU MKWANAZI

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Proteas women's team continue to excel on and off the field.

Forbes released its annual highest-paid athletes ranking for the period 1 May 2021 to 1 May 2022 and the top 10 were all male. Argentinian soccer player Lionel Messi raked in $130 million, taking home the top spot, while NBA player Giannis Antetokounmpo made $80.9 million from shooting hoops.

While the situation is improving – considering that American tennis player Billie Jean King was awarded almost $3 000 less than her male counterpart in the Italian Open in the 70s – progress could be faster.

"The issue of recognition, salaries, benefitting from broadcast rights and other topics are trending in the right direction. Over the last decade or so, we have seen women's sport a whole lot more on television. We have seen women's sport gain competitiveness and professionalisation. In 2013, the Proteas women's team received the first batch of professional contracts and fast-forward to 2022, we had 15 fully contracted players as well as 10 high-performance contracts for those who are fighting to represent South Africa," said Lita Gqirana, South African Women's Cricket Media Manager.

> People find it fascinating and inspiring to see a woman ride a bike for leisure. They are even more encouraged as I am a black cyclist who does this for the love of it. My elders still see cycling as a form of transport, but I am changing this just by showing them my love for cycling as a sport, especially among black women in rural parts of South Africa.

GOING GLOBAL

It is not only in South Africa where progress is being made, but also at an international level. Last year, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – a United Nations agenda for the empowerment of women and girls, as well as attempting to free boys and men of oppressive masculinities – celebrated its 27th year of making a difference through equality in sports.

"Globally, there are a number of developing leagues for women, and this represents a whole lot more earning opportunities for our players. The goal is to make sure that a player can get to a level where they can make a comfortable living while they are doing what they love, which is playing sports, and in our case, cricket. The aim is for our players to be self-sufficient to such an extent that young girls can look up to them and be inspired to pursue a career not only as cricket players, but also in other sports.

"Cricket South Africa does great work in introducing youth to the game, as demonstrated by the KFC Mini Cricket Programme, which has been running for more than 30 years in South Africa. We have over 300 000 active young people playing cricket as part of the programme, and 40% to 50% of them are young girls. With the Proteas having performed so well in many competitions in the last few years, players such as Ayabonga Khaka and Laura Wolvaardt have really become shining beacons for cricket in general," he added.

WORLDWIDE CHALLENGES

When behemoth sports brand Adidas launched its She Breaks Barriers initiative in 2018, it identified six key barriers to sport. These include the lack of education around the benefits of participating in sports, insufficient support in terms of mentoring, and safe transportation to participate in sports. Additionally, hindrances include inadequate spaces that welcome women and identity, where women are told that their body type or cultural background do not fit the mould of a sportswoman, and lastly, insufficient access to start playing sports at any level.

At some or other point in their lives, Buhle Ngobese, Refilwe Mogorosi, Remofilwe Moeketsi and Andisiwe Skeyi all faced at least one, if not all six of these barriers. But through perseverance, they excelled so much that they successfully completed last year's SPAR Swiss Epic, a gruelling mountain bike race in Graubünden, Switzerland. As black women, there

Images: Supplied

GRAUBÜNDEN
AROSA
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Conquering the Alps as part of 2022's SPAR Swiss Epic.

Ricola ERLEBNISWEG
1922 m ü.M.

Demonstrating that endurance cycling is for everyone.

are extra layers of obstacles they have to overcome just to enjoy a sport they love.

"One day, I came across a flyer of an inner Joburg city bike ride and after hiring a bike so I could take part, I bought a bike and joined a cycling club. Female and black female representation was not much when I started six years ago, but it is great to witness an increase in female cyclists over the years. It is exciting to see women who are learning to ride for the first time, women cycling communities, online women's platforms like Zwift and even endurance events like multi-stage races," notes Ngobese.

Mogorosi has been riding for 10 years, after her dad bought her a bicycle for her 13th birthday. She has been at the receiving end of different looks and comments ever since.

"Since I was young, people have been surprised to see a dedicated female cyclist riding as well as I do, while others are impressed that I ride professionally. Some women feel sorry for me because they find cycling difficult, while others say I am brave because they would not even attempt cycling," says Mogorosi.

Moeketsi hails from Pampierstad in the Northern Cape, a small town where cycling is seen as a means to commute. Her townsfolk beam with pride every time she makes the trek from Johannesburg to her hometown in the Frances Baard District municipality.

"People find it fascinating and inspiring to see a woman ride a bike for leisure. They are even more encouraged as I am a black cyclist who does this for the love of it. My elders still see cycling as a form of transport, but I am changing this just by showing them my love for cycling as a sport, especially among black women in rural parts of South Africa," she says.

To some, it may seem that this is just sport, but to the women who excel and love what they do, it is much more. Sport helps them to break barriers in politics, business and other sectors. They are more confident in a male-dominated world where most still earn less than their male counterparts and women-dominated sports such as netball are not well-funded like other sports. But despite these headwinds, the women's Momentum Proteas, Women Boks, Banyana Banyana, SPAR Proteas, hockey team and other national outfits continue to level the various playing fields they participate in one game at a time. D

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TEXT: GEZZY S SIBISI, IMAGES: ZANDILE VILAKAZI

MAKING HEALTH CARE FOR WOMEN AFFORDABLE & ACCESSIBLE

Inspired by their doctor moms and midwife grandmother, and informed by their own frustrating experiences, Thato Schermer and Dr Nonhlanhla Sitole co-founded the digital health platform, Zoie Health Technologies, for women in SA and beyond.

The female body undergoes major changes from the time women get their periods until they reach menopause. With these changes come unique health concerns requiring specialised care and support. However, as Covid-19 took a swing at an already limping health system, all resources were diverted to address the pandemic, leaving women's healthcare buckling. According to Statistics South Africa, routine and emergency maternal health services were the hardest hit. Furthermore, the high unmet need for contraceptives resulted in an alarming increase in late-adolescent pregnancy, as well as diseases.

As more and more doors closed on girls and women seeking medical attention, leveraging technology seemed like the best way to make quality healthcare more accessible to all women, say co-founders of Zoie Health Technologies, Thato Schermer and Dr Nonhlanhla Sitole.

"Before Zoie, I was aware of the possibility of virtual consultations due to the changing healthcare landscape caused by Covid. This was a big part of what inspired us to build a virtual health platform. Our research showed this was a growing trend and we saw that digital solutions would play a big role in improving access to healthcare," says Co-Founder and Chief Clinical Officer, Dr Sitole.

Launched in August 2021, the digital health platform has an app and a website, which has garnered more than 5 000 members, including women in Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini and Namibia. The two co-founders pride themselves on having an all-female team of general practitioners and specialists who offer a variety of services, including virtual consultations, free resources and community chats. They recently launched a home-testing kit for the human papillomavirus (HPV), the most common sexually transmitted infection and the leading cause of cervical cancer (the fourth most common cancer among women globally). The kit allows women to self-swab for HPV testing – a gamechanger for early cancer detection, as they are more affordable and convenient than regular tests at private doctors. Their online store not only offers medication, but also serves as a one-stop shop for expectant moms in need of goodies for their hospital stay and baby essentials.

Schermer and Sitole are cousins with a solid relationship built on nostalgic memories of countless visits to their grandma Annah Simelela's house, located in Meadowlands, Soweto. Sitole was a quiet child who immersed herself in books and academics, while Schermer was energetic and studious, and was often called out for being "bossy".

"Growing up we were very close, spending weekends and school holidays together either at our homes or at Gogo's. I think what inspired the birth of Zoie was really our mothers and grandmother. Our mothers are doctors and our grandmother was a midwife. I think seeing our mothers' drive, determination and desire to serve others with their gifts and talents was a wonderful inspiration and lesson for us," explains Schermer.

Dr Sitole's mother, Dr Nono Simelela, was South Africa's first black female obstetrician-gynaecologist. She excitedly recalls vivid accounts of her mother's surgery when she witnessed her in action.

> "An all-female team of general practitioners and specialists offers a variety of services, including virtual consultations, free resources and community chats."

"Some weekends, I would spend my mornings in her consulting rooms watching people coming to her to be healed and taken care of. A few times, I was lucky enough to witness her delivering babies, and I was blown away by the role she played in bringing newborn babies into the arms of their mothers."

Dr Sitole had always been a science enthusiast growing up, and so after completing high school she enrolled in a BSc at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her studies led her to an interest in genetics, which resulted in her completing her Honours, Master's and PhD in molecular and cell biology. Her PhD research, which focuses on cervical cancer at a molecular level, has been instrumental in her efforts to build the Zoie brand that includes her podcast, *WomanKind*.

"*WomanKind* was launched in early February of this year. Currently, we release a new episode once a month. Some of the topics we've covered are HPV testing, cervical cancer, mental health, fertility and postpartum topics like breastfeeding."

> Dr Sitole's PhD research on cervical cancer at a molecular level has been instrumental in her efforts to build the Zoie brand that includes her podcast, *WomanKind*.

Schermer is a tech enthusiast. Besides being the CEO at Zoie, she and her husband are angel investors in tech start-ups across the continent. Schermer has a BBusSci Honours degree specialising in economics and marketing from the University of Cape Town. She also completed courses at Wits Business School in management and advanced mergers and acquisitions, as well as courses at Harvard Business School in strategy and leadership.

"I think the formal business education helped in setting up Zoie, while my experience in the technology field helped with product development."

In light of South Africa's social issues concerning the plight of women, Schermer has partnered with AURA Technology to offer the Zoie Plus emergency panic button. This nifty feature allows Zoie members to connect to a network of registered armed security and medical staff in the event of a domestic violence or sexual assault incident. According to their research, the response time to such a case by the SAPS is 24 minutes, while their emergency panic button responds in less than five minutes.

Currently, Schermer is a beaming soon-to-be first-time mother, while Dr Sitole is a proud mother of two. Just a few years ago, however, the pair were in different health seasons in their lives. Schermer was trying to make serious decisions regarding her reproductive health but was struggling to find affordable contraception options. Dr Sitole on the other hand had just given birth to her second son but was once again battling postpartum depression.

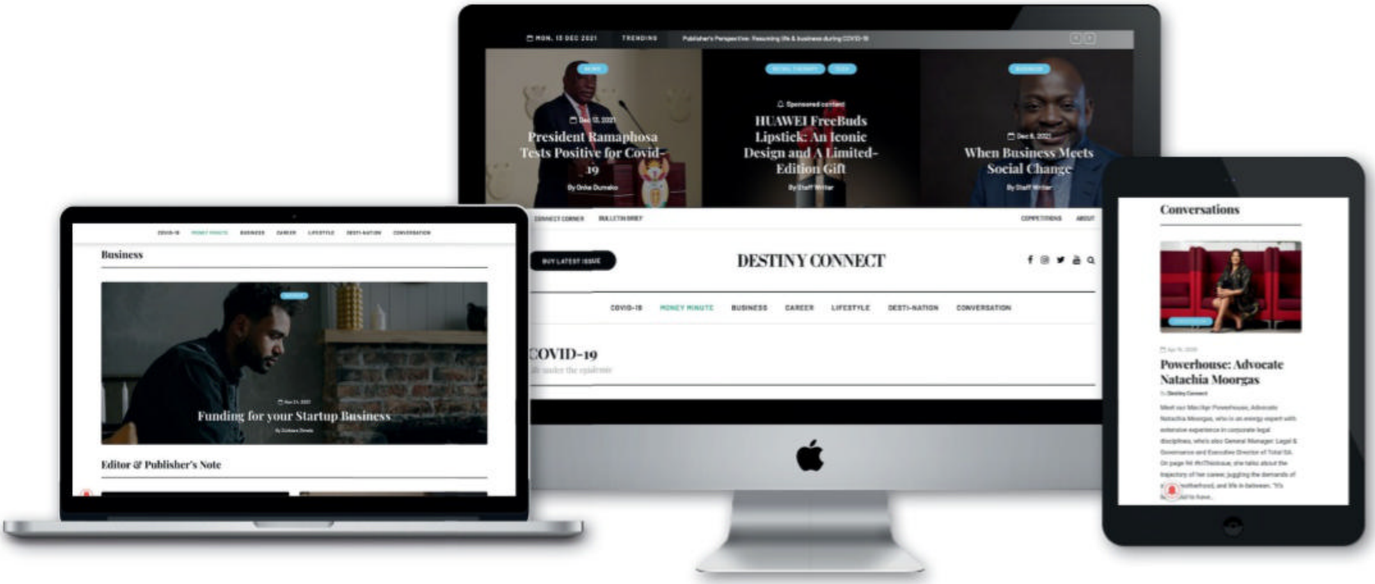
"Personally, I have encountered many challenges as a woman when it comes to my health," shares Dr Sitole. "From a young age, there was a lack of information and resources on how a young woman approaches her healthcare journey, from contraception to managing periods. I was always afraid to ask questions and avoided any clinic visits, including the clinic on campus. I had no clue how to go about discussing contraception with anyone. Later on, after I had my babies, with each pregnancy I struggled with postpartum depression and breastfeeding issues. I had no idea where to turn to for support and understanding of what I was going through."

Dr Sitole and Schermer felt that their experiences mirrored so many other women they had spoken to, and so they felt compelled to create this virtual space for not just SA women, but for women across the world.

"Each woman has a unique health journey and this is what we take into consideration at Zoie, and each of our team members uses their own experiences to bring solutions that can help many women in similar situations," Dr Sitole explains.

Although Dr Sitole's children are now aged 13 and five, she says her experience with postpartum depression has made her grow more fond of and connected to babies and young children. Schermer and herself are excitedly awaiting the arrival of the new addition to their family and the future prospects of Zoie.

Speaking on her pregnancy journey, Schermer expands, "In my early pregnancy, I've been very ill with very little I can do to change it, so I've learnt to take each day as it comes and celebrate my body because it's doing an incredible thing. Zoie has definitely helped me learn more about my own body and has helped me get the help and resources I need to have a successful pregnancy."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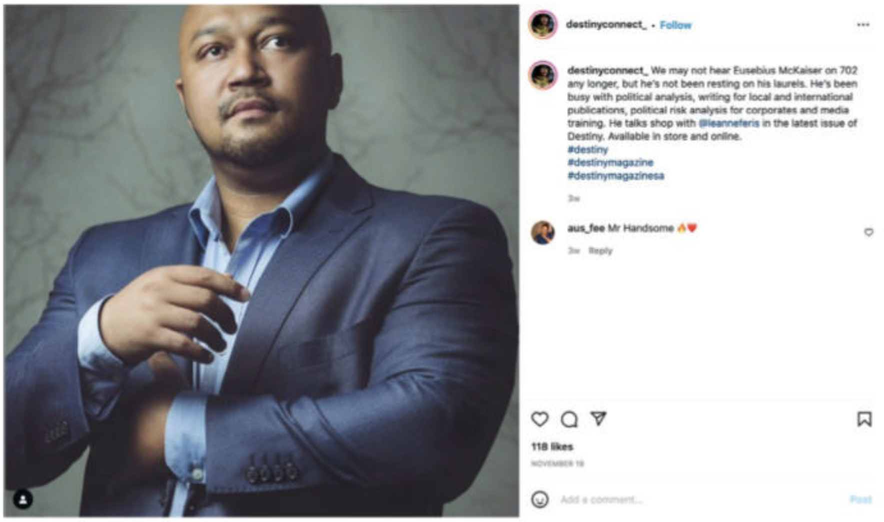

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destinyconnect_ We may not hear Eusebius McKaiser on 702 any longer, but he's not been resting on his laurels. He's been busy with political analysis, writing for local and international publications, political risk analysis for corporates and media training. He talks shop with @leanneferis in the latest issue of Destiny. Available in store and online.
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INVEST IN YOUR BUSINESS' FUTURE

Don't sacrifice experienced and talented staff for short-term gain.

TEXT: STAFF WRITER

Images: Gallo Images/Getty Images

Right now, as business owners are being bombarded by rising costs and natural disasters, the easy way out seems to be cutting the wage bill to contain costs. But businesses need to take a longer-term view and not simply retrench. They need to bite the bullet and invest in the future, which often includes retaining experienced and skilled staff.

Business coach, motivational speaker, author and entrepreneur, Cindy Norcott, created her company, ProTalent, in 1994 at the age of 23. Since then, she has experienced first-hand a turbulent economy that has stretched from the years of euphoria and plenty post the appointment of Nelson Mandela as president, to the doom and gloom of the state capture years and now, the difficulties of post-pandemic survival.

Despite continued protests about skills shortages and unfilled positions in both the public and private sectors, Norcott says that many companies are still downsizing to be as lean and as profitable as possible.

"The vagaries of the past two years have resulted in many organisations having to restructure themselves completely. Many companies realised, to their detriment, that the fat had crept in during the good years. It appears that leaner organisations were better able to weather the storms," she says.

That includes everything from economic storms such as load shedding and rocketing petrol prices to the flood damage in KwaZulu-Natal and even the severe drought in the Eastern Cape.

But the most vulnerable to the fallout are the more mature or tenured staff members. "They have had the proverbial cross on their backs. They are often priced out of the market, having enjoyed year after year of generous annual increases. It has become a common practice for businesses to offer generous packages to these "expensive" staff members, to downgrade the roles and to then replace these staff with junior, cheaper staff," she explains.

However, this could well be short-term gain but long-term pain, she warns.

"When a company loses a tenured staff member, they end up losing muscle memory. The people who have been there a long time know the history of the company and are often custodians of the culture. When companies lose too many experienced staff in one go, it can cause a dilution in their culture as well as disruption in their productivity," she points out.

Norcott notes that although many companies see their staff as their biggest cost item on their income statements, the flip side is that most businesses are absolutely valueless without their staff.

"I believe that employers should look at other items that can sneak up and add up and create hefty monthly costs such as rentals. Many companies have accepted annual escalations on their rentals. It might be time to ask for a rental correction to be in line with market conditions," she suggests.

She also encourages companies to go through their expenses line by line on a monthly basis, asking themselves, is this cost necessary? Is there a cheaper supplier? Do we really need it, or do we want it?

As a company owner, she also believes that saving money should never be the sole focus of a successful business.

"I think that employers need to ensure that their valued staff are engaged and happy at work. I recommend that they conduct "stay" interviews, to ask their staff if they are happy and get their input on how they can have a better experience at work. Many employers forget to ask their staff what would make them more content and motivated at work. Often, these are simple things that don't cost much, such as flexible working hours, work-from-anywhere policies and quality coffee.

It is this ability to see the lighter side of a dire situation that has put Norcott's latest book, *How Does She Do It?*, on bookshelves across the country. She writes about the singular challenges encountered while growing her business as a female entrepreneur striving for a work-life balance.

One of the most important values that emerges as the pages are turned is the value of good communication.

"I think regular communication is key. Management should always focus on letting staff know how the company is doing. Most employees don't feel recognised enough. I also think that management needs to adopt a more modern approach, not castigating staff for being five minutes late or making it impossible for them to take leave or ask for an afternoon off. I think the approach of management must be less on the inputs and more on the outputs of their staff," she advises.

Most importantly, it is about making valued staff part of the business solution rather than part of its problems, she concludes. D

> Although many companies see their staff as their biggest cost item on their income statements, the flip side is that most businesses are absolutely valueless without their staff.

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YOUR TRUTH

MATTHEW HUSSEY, a Los Angeles-based entrepreneur, YouTube content creator and author, shares how to become truly confident and say goodbye to imposter syndrome.

YOUR SUCCESS

Images: Gallo Images/Getty Images

Résumé confidence is all about being confident based on everything you've achieved. However, feeling confident on the deepest level, regardless of your résumé, is important because what happens if you get fired tomorrow or your career starts going badly? Your confidence will go with it.

So how do we move from résumé confidence into real confidence? How do we get to a point where we no longer need the résumé for our confidence anymore?

I want to see my success as the traits that got me here. The beautiful parts of my character that make me who I am today. The value I have as a person.

If I make my success my achievements, then I'm not going to be focused on connecting with other people. I'm going to be focused on impressing other people. Insecure people try to impress. Secure people connect.

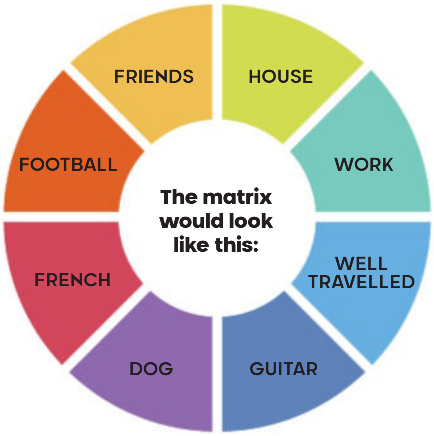
I want to lift the hood on the résumé and ask what's underneath. Is it true security and who we are and what our value is? Or is it insecurity? Is it imposter syndrome? Is it "I wear all these badges all the time because I'm afraid that I won't be enough as myself"?

I want to talk about owning our success, but from a place of having become truly successfully confident in ourselves. And I'm going to give you three secrets for doing that.

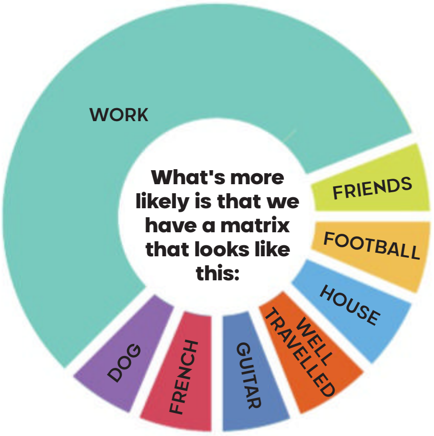
BEWARE YOUR MUTATIONS

We all have mutations – the things that we have gotten a lot of validation for. For some of us, it's pleasing people. For others, it's kindness or always delivering on a project.

But we all have that thing that we have started to build all our validation around. If you place all the things in our life that give us confidence in a matrix – it might be that you get some confidence from your friends, your work, your great relationship with your dog, that you can play the guitar, or speak French, or that you are well travelled. It could also be that you have a nice house, or that you're good at a particular sport.



However, in truth our matrix does not look like the one above, because it is too perfect. We don't have that even distribution.


WORK
What's more likely is that we have a matrix that looks like this:
FRIENDS
FOOTBALL
HOUSE
WELL TRAVELLED
GUITAR
FRENCH
DOG

There's one big dominant area, and then other little ones. And that big dominant area is from whatever we derive the most confidence and most of our identity. For a lot of people, it's their career, and then you might have some time left over for friends, hobbies or for going to the gym or yoga.

What is also typically a really big area in people's matrix and from where they derive a huge amount of identity, is a romantic relationship. Any relationship, if we are invested in it, is going to cause heartbreak. But if you've ever had a terrible breakup that at the time left you feeling like you were going to die, it's because we have been deriving so much of our identity from that one part of our lives.

When something becomes so big that it drowns out everything else, it becomes a mutation, and mutations become our vulnerabilities. Whatever we have decided to derive the most validation from becomes a vulnerability.

Is there an area where you are too dependent on that one thing for your confidence? Draw your own matrix and fill out the squares. Ask yourself how they really look in terms of size. Then ask yourself, where have I created a mutation? And where do I need to diversify my matrix?

Then start to put more investment into smaller squares to grow them and make them more important, so that you become less dependent on that one area for all your confidence.

What's powerful about this process is that when you do it, those squares start to expand. And this doesn't mean that your biggest square is not important, but it no longer holds your confidence hostage.

The number one secret to real confidence, and not résumé confidence, is to be aware of your mutations, and then to reverse them by investing in new areas that haven't gotten enough attention in the last weeks, months and even years of your life, or maybe even ever.

SET BOUNDARIES WITH PEOPLE AND STICK TO THEM

Not setting a boundary in our work life can look like: I get my validation from being the person that can handle any project you give me. So just give me whatever you have. Because I will never have a reputation for saying no.

"

One of the keys to confidence is to start setting boundaries and sticking to them. That's like keeping a promise to ourselves. And every time we keep a promise to ourselves, it's like depositing a credit in our trust bank with ourselves. And that builds confidence.

"

I'm terrified of saying no, so I say yes all the time to every project and then I complain to other people that I'm overwhelmed, or that I'm burned out, or that I'm stressed.

Can you relate to this? If your mutation is people-pleasing and showing that you can always deliver, then you're not setting boundaries. Because having a boundary would jeopardise that identity as being someone who is always available, someone who says yes, someone who shows up.

Now our fear is that if we suddenly have a boundary and say, "I don't have time for that. I can't do that if you want me to do these other projects well", something bad will happen. We won't be respected, or loved, or seen as worthy or necessary. A deep-seated confidence issue about what makes us worthy is how much we are doing. In that scenario, you think you wouldn't be worthy if you weren't doing all those projects or tasks.

This shows up in relationships, too. When I'm coaching a woman and a guy isn't committing to her, he doesn't want to say yes to a real relationship and be exclusive, and if she's putting up with that, she doesn't have a boundary in that area. Now, why won't we have a boundary in that area? Because we're afraid that if we make our demand – you either commit or I'm out – that we'll lose someone.

One of the keys to confidence is to start setting boundaries and sticking to them. That's like keeping a promise to ourselves. And every time we keep a promise to ourselves, it's like depositing a credit in our trust bank with ourselves. And that builds confidence. So, keeping promises to ourselves builds confidence. Every time we trash one of our boundaries, we erode our own confidence by breaking a promise to ourselves.

I'll give you a quick hack to start enforcing a boundary. Ask yourself, "Why should I stick to this boundary?" Because sticking to a boundary is courageous. We have to risk losing something that we value. We have to risk that it might not work. Something might change. Therefore, we must remind ourselves that I am continuously upset in this area, I'm continuously disappointed or resentful in this area. If it continues to make me feel disrespected and taken for granted, then what I'm doing right now is not working. And it probably has never worked.

And if we start to understand that not having a boundary in a specific area has never worked, it has never made us happy, then we stop questioning if we could enforce this boundary. Instead we start thinking well, I have to because the alternative continuously leads to pain.

Yes, there's going to be some initial pain when I set a new boundary. I call it the teething period. Every time you set a new boundary there's going to be someone in your life who doesn't like it. They liked the old you who did all that stuff for them, or who said yes all the time, or who settled for less in the relationship, and that made life comfortable for them. No one is going to thank you for taking away something that they have been getting before and that they've become entitled to.

But setting that boundary, although it will come with an initial teething period, will lead to a new result. And when you get a new result, and it's a desirable one, that becomes a reference point and your confidence will latch onto that and you'll realise that it worked. We have a new standard; we have a new boundary. We enforced it, and it worked.

> "Whatever area of our lives we have decided to derive the most validation from becomes a vulnerability."

In our dating life, either the guy came back, or I moved on feeling good about myself. Win-win. It worked; I feel good about myself.

In our work lives, I said no to that project because I need to do the things I'm doing well at and excel. Suddenly they found someone else to do the project. Turns out, I wasn't the only person in the company that you could load stuff onto. It worked! And I got more respect in the process, and people started to respect my time more. It worked and I get a new reference point.

But in order to get a new reference point we have to set a new boundary we weren't brave enough to set before. And the way we get brave enough to set a boundary and stick to it is by reminding ourselves that the opposite has never worked. Not setting that boundary has never made us happy, has never made us proud of ourselves, it has never reliably made us confident. It has only ever made us feel like we're lacking, taken for granted, resentful and mad at other people and hating ourselves.

CHANGE FROM WHERE YOU DERIVE YOUR CERTAINTY

Many of us, even if we're skilled at something, say no to opportunities or don't pursue certain opportunities because we're terrified that things will go wrong. We're terrified that we will fail or that we will make ourselves look foolish. That we won't be capable even though we've been practising for something our whole lives. That we won't be good enough. Now that's because we're basing our sense of certainty around whether or not we win. Whether or not we get praise. Whether or not it all works the way we wanted it to.

One of the definitions of confidence is a feeling of certainty about something. And we can choose what to base that certainty around. I make videos on YouTube every week. Some of those videos are massive hits. Some of them flop. If I base whether I make a video this week on whether it will be a hit or a flop, I won't make videos anymore because I cannot have certainty about the success of a video. I can only guess at what might work.

I have to base my certainty around something different. For me, I base my certainty around truth. Today, I want to say something that feels true. If I did that, then in my books, I've succeeded. Now, if I base my confidence around being right all the time, then I'm going to be mortally wounded if someone points out a hole in one of my arguments. But because I base my certainty around being married to the truth no matter what, I'm going to celebrate that you've made me realise that there is a falseness to one of my arguments. My next speech is going to be even better because you've pointed out that weakness in my talk. You have to ask yourself where your certainty comes from.

For instance, if you're looking for love and you base your certainty on your existing identity, let's say, "I'm attractive, I'm good looking, and I have to maintain that identity", then here's the problem: you'll go out and you'll get rejected if you start taking risks by chatting up strangers. And then it affects your identity and your ego says: "We can't have that". So, you stop taking chances. You don't go and talk to that attractive person you'd like to speak to.

But what if you rather take your certainty from your intentions. You base your certainty instead on the fact that you are someone who wants to find an amazing connection with someone. And you don't mind how many people you have to get to know or talk to in order to find that. Anyone who rejects you, can't be the one that offers that connection you're looking for. With this mindset, you'll be able to take risks, because it's more important to find a connection than to protect your identity.

Professionally, if you say that your intentions are to be as useful as possible to this company and learn as much as possible and grow as much as possible, then you're going to take the opportunity. But if someone offers you the opportunity and your certainty comes from never making a mistake, then you're not going to take it. You're going to stay where it is safe.

One of the greatest hacks for confidence is not to suddenly discover this deep well of confidence about how amazing you are. It's just to change the game altogether. "I'm now going to place my certainty into something that makes it inevitable that I will take risks. Inevitable that I'll keep pushing forward. Inevitable that I'll keep growing." Because it's not based in any of those things that would make me terrified to take a step forward in my life.

A friend of mine, Ed Mylett, a business mentor, said: "Matthew, selling is not 'I'm going to get you to believe in what I'm offering. Selling is 'I just need you to believe that I believe in what I'm offering'."

And the way we get people to believe that is with a sense of certainty. And you may ask how do I get that type of certainty? You decide. Because certainty is available and free for anybody.

We're all uncertain in life. Noone knows what they're doing. Everyone's making it up. But some people do it with a sense of certainty.

Have you ever been faced with making a decision when there are too many choices? Suddenly, everything seems impossible. But if you just make a choice and get really invested in it and really focused on it, then it becomes great. Life is like that.

So, you can have a sense of certainty today by deciding to invest in your plan, in yourself, in where you're going, in what you think is the best thing right now. And other people will find that certainty in you attractive, compelling, sexy and safe. And they will want to go where you go as a result. D

Images: Gallo Images/Getty Images

CLEAN beauty?

Have you ever considered the impact the beauty industry has on our environment?

TEXT: STAFF WRITER

Sometimes it's a good idea to take a step back and look at the impact we have on the planet. Looking at the beauty industry, what can be done to further raise awareness and to encourage more consumers to opt for a cleaner, more sustainable product offering?

"We only have one planet and the human race depends on it. Nature doesn't need people, people need nature to survive," says Dr Stephan Helary, Founder of Terres d'Afrique.

Clean beauty has been at the forefront of new beauty trends – speaking to natural and no harsh ingredients being used in products as well as a greener and more sustainable approach to skincare. However, there's also an ugly trend called greenwashing.

"Greenwashing involves conveying a false message to the consumer whereby the perception is that the product or behaviour of a company is more environmentally friendly or sustainable when in fact, it is not. Or gaining a large financial benefit from the promotion of a more planet/animal by-product-friendly option. Consumers should be encouraged to choose a sustainable option year round at an affordable rate. Misleading claims such as healthier, more natural, chemical free, less wasteful to the environment are deemed greenwashing if they are not true,” says Brand Manager at Lulu & Marula, Salmari Fourie. Society globally not only consumes too much, but also too many unsustainably made products. The beauty industry has a huge responsibility to play in the matter. It is one of the industries responsible for producing the most single-use plastic packaging, most of which isn’t recyclable. Over time, plastic degrades into very small particles, which are now found everywhere in the environment – from the air we breathe to the rain drops from the skies and in the food we eat. “Clean also means sustainable packaging. Only 14% of plastic ever made has been recycled. The rest ends up in landfills. One garbage truck of single-use plastic packaging ends up in the oceans every minute,” says Helary.

What makes greenwashing easy is the fact that the beauty industry is not regulated, therefore brands can say and do pretty much what they want as long as they comply with labelling laws. Formulation Specialist at Lulu & Marula, Monique Spaltman, says, “I’d love to see a more regulated industry. If governing bodies could release a more formal definition as to what it means to be a clean beauty brand, that would be amazing and really differentiate the true sustainable brands from the non-sustainable brands. This will elevate consumer trust, confidence and loyalty in brands. Unfortunately, without clear guidelines and certifications, the industry might become more and more competitive, driven mostly by consumer perception as to what is acceptably clean and what is not.”

> It’s up to consumers to encourage beauty brands to do better and be better.

For now, it’s up to consumers to be more conscious on a daily basis of what we consume, which includes what we buy, use and throw away.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

In today’s context, it is difficult to tell if a brand is truly clean or not, unless you have good awareness of bad ingredients. However, consumers can start identifying truly sustainable brands and products by following a few guidelines:

Look out for brands that offer minimalist packaging. For example, no unnecessary and additional printed cartons, leaflets and inserts. These are not always recyclable depending on the finish of the board.

Do your research and look out for ethical certifications such as Fair Trade, Ecocert, Soil Association, Organic, and Beauty Without Cruelty. They all talk about different things in the realm of clean beauty but indicate the brand has good ethical intentions and where they want to focus their attention.

Reduced water usage (either no water in the formulation or no water needed to use the product).

There is a movement of retail chains in Europe and the USA specialising in clean beauty. However, they each have their own criteria to define what they don’t allow in the product they sell. This trend is growing in South Africa and consumers should see a similar evolution of the beauty retail environment.

Try and choose organic over natural and very importantly, avoid plastic packaging as much as possible.

“I would even say that sustainability is no longer enough and regeneration is necessary. Sustainability means that what we take and what the earth gives is equal, but it is not the case; we have been taking more for years and now we need to regenerate,” Helary continues.

Doing your own research on harmful ingredients is important. Pay attention to the ingredient lists of the products you are buying and if you spot something you’re unsure of, research it first and make an informed decision.

There are also some key ingredients/claims to look out for on clean beauty product labels to use as a guideline to assist you in making an informed decision before buying the product:

Plant seed oils (avocado, marula, sweet almond, macadamia nut, sesame seed, etc.) are packed with antioxidants and fatty acids that feed and nourish the skin.

Dermatologically approved means that the products have been lab tested on human skin and certified by a dermatologist that the product is safe to use.

Botanical extracts (aloe, fruits, vegetables and flowers) offer calming/soothing/anti-inflammatory/cell-regenerating benefits to the skin.

Gentle cleansing ingredients derived from sustainably sourced plant stocks, betaines, and cocoyl isethionates.

Biodegradable ingredients. A simple internet search should tell you if the ingredient is of vegetal origin and whether it is biodegradable or not. If a product label claims biodegradable ingredients and you are skeptical, do a quick search to assist in a more informed decision before buying the product.

It’s up to consumers to encourage beauty brands to do better and be better. A few ideas to kickstart this movement include supporting smaller, local, sustainable brands, asking questions and doing your research instead of simply accepting what the label says. Understand and read the ingredients list on products. This way you can choose what you’re putting on your body and skin.

POSITIVE CHANGE CAN START AT ROCK BOTTOM

TEXT: STAFF WRITER

Mental health issues and addiction often go hand in hand, but low points can become the start of healing.

When difficulties with mental health, substance abuse or other forms of addiction lead a person to a crisis in their work or personal life, this low point can become a starting point for healing and recovery.

"For a person who is struggling with deep-rooted trauma and emotional issues, it can seem that drinking, getting high or using another form of 'escape' offers a short-term solution or coping strategy," says John Ralphs, Occupational Therapist in the COPE therapy team at Netcare Akeso Stepping Stones mental health facility in Cape Town.

"All too often, when someone

Images: Gallo Images/Getty Images

does not receive the professional help they need after hitting rock bottom, the dangerous combination of a psychiatric condition and substance abuse can cause their lives to spiral even further out of control. At first one area of the person's life may begin to suffer, such as the loss of a job or a significant relationship. Tragically, there is always a new, even worse rock bottom situation that a person may find themselves in when mental health disorders and addiction remain unaddressed."

According to Ralphs, the stigma attached to addiction leads many people to conceal their habits even from those closest to them for as long as possible, and many are unwilling to admit they have a problem.

"Denial is the hallmark of addiction. With some types of substance use, such as crystal meth or heroin, the signs of addiction are often clear. It is not so easy to identify when a person has a gambling or sex addiction or is abusing medication, however these too can be very damaging to a person's life.

"A person who has anxiety or depression, for example, might find alcohol dependence goes unnoticed for some time, particularly if the nature of their work involves drinking alcohol and entertaining, it may be seen as socially acceptable.

"In many cases, people are reluctant to disclose they have a problem with some form of addiction, and this may only come out at a later stage when their mental health is significantly deteriorating. The dual diagnosis approach acknowledges that mental health and addiction disorders are most often interlinked and when treatment is integrated, the prospects of lasting recovery and progress are more likely."

The dual diagnosis unit at Netcare Akeso Stepping Stones runs an inpatient programme to assist individuals with various types of substance use or behavioural addictions together with a psychiatric condition such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), among others. The multidisciplinary team includes psychologists, psychiatrists, occupational therapists, addiction counsellors and general practitioners who work closely together to provide comprehensive treatment, supported by experienced nursing staff.

"A person who might have been very reluctant to accept help may pause to reflect when they reach a new low – such as being evicted from their home or receiving a warning for poor work performance.

For concerned loved ones, the person may be more open to accepting help when they get to a low point where they realise their quality of life is seriously impacted."

Ralphs points out that people who begin treatment with voluntary admission to an inpatient facility tend to progress quicker. "Treatment outcomes don't differ so significantly for involuntary admissions when a family obtains a court order with the support of a social worker to secure treatment for a loved one whose decisions are endangering themselves or others.

"While the likelihood of successful recovery is similar to voluntary clients, the length of stay required to achieve this may be longer. For families with limited resources, the timing of an intervention is crucial to make the most of the 21 days' admission covered by medical schemes. Those who are unwillingly participating in treatment may take longer to reach the point where they are ready to change," says Ralphs. "Some people have preconceived ideas about recovery groups and rehabilitation. We introduce clients to some of the tools available, including the 12 Step Programme, but there are also more modern approaches that are less doctrinal. Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), which is evidence-based psychotherapy often used in building distress tolerance and the treatment of personality disorders and interpersonal conflicts, is one of many approaches that we use."

The Netcare Akeso Stepping Stones dual diagnosis team also includes recovery assistants, people who themselves are in recovery from addiction and who speak from their own experiences. "The recovery assistants are crucial in connecting with clients from a place of empathy and demonstrating that progress is possible, although recovery truly is an ongoing process," Ralphs says.

For help in a psychological crisis, the Netcare Akeso crisis helpline on 0861 435 787 is available 24 hours a day. Fellowships such as Alcoholics Anonymous (24-hour line 0861 435 722) and Narcotics Anonymous (0861 00 6962) are also valuable options for assistance. D

TEXT: CYRIL NAICKER

PRIME TIME

We find out what Shahan Ramkissoon has been up to after leaving the airwaves and get an inside scoop on his approach to fashion and grooming.

Images: Ray Singh

PRESSED
BUT NOT
PLEXED
IR;
BUT NOT
STRUCK
DESTROYED
Corinthians 4:8-9

With our eyes collectively glued on the daily news both locally and internationally, one eNCA anchor's face has been a reassuring constant for more than a decade. Impeccably groomed, a trademark mischievous smile, his fierce approach to journalism – the overarching question pervades, who exactly is Shahan Ramkissoon?

Absent from our airwaves recently, I was curious to discover what Shahan's been up to – and to get an inside scoop on his approach to fashion and grooming.

A big career transition in combination with a relocation to Cape Town finds Shahan on the precipice of a dazzling new chapter: "I've loved Cape Town for as long as I can remember. I've wanted to move here for more than 15 years, but couldn't find the right job, so obviously I jumped at this new opportunity. For me, Cape Town is the most beautiful city in South Africa. Every sight is a wonder; this place truly refreshes my soul."

Digging deeper, I asked Shahan about his studies and 17-year career trajectory to date.

"Proudly said, I'm a product of Chatsworth, Durban, and started writing for the *Young Daily News* at age 14. Feeling the need to expose my school for withholding the report cards of underprivileged students because they couldn't afford their fees, I wrote about it in the provincial newspaper. When the education department took our school officials to task, I grasped the power of journalism. Since then, I'm driven to bring about change through the stories I tell. And it's never been easy. I've been chased out of newsrooms, pulled off air for 'not having the right voice', denied a position as news reporter because of being "too camp" – the list goes on. So, in true Shahan style, I pushed and pushed until my talent was recognised. I make it my daily focus to improve my craft while challenging dodgy politicians in pursuit of true democracy, my frankness inspired by countless suffering citizens who deserve answers. I know the right questions to ask. And there's no sugar coating them in the face of such blatant corruption. During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, eNCA viewers dubbed me the 'voice of South Africans'. We're all fed up with thieves and marauders masquerading as politicians and government officials, and should no longer stand for it."

With such a weighty commission, I was curious to explore what led Shahan to his recent career change.

"It's time to tell our nation's most positive stories. At age 37, I co-founded Feel SA with Tanya Nefdt, which gives South Africans and the world alternative news about our great country, solely focused on all the good our people and businesses are doing. I also launched my own elderflower-and-vanilla-infused gin, called Lenyora, and outside of that, I'm dabbling in modelling and acting. Looking back one day I aim to say, 'I really gave it my all!'"

Eager to glean some grooming tips, I shifted gear, complimenting Shahan on his flawless appearance.

"My hair is sponsored by Medellin Gentlemen Groomers in Claremont. I pop in every Friday to freshen up my hair and beard. During the week, I line-up my beard myself to avoid looking scruffy. I'm a perfectionist, so a fresh fade and straight beard line is integral to my mental health."

Laughing, we then found ourselves chatting about fashion. "It's challenging to buy clothing because I'm not hugely daring, well not until recently anyway. I'm usually the plain T-shirt and jeans guy, opting for dark colours that don't draw too much attention. Tailored or slim fit cuts are non-negotiable because they're more flattering. My go-to-stores are Zara, Country Road, and Trenery – and for those staple investment pieces you can't keep me away from Gucci and Louis Vuitton."

In terms of his personal style, I asked how Shahan moves the needle. "My style is inspired by trips abroad. Recently, Atlanta and New York have added some real spice. My look is edgier, ultimately part of my evolution, I guess. Some of my fashion really raises eyebrows, but I couldn't care less. You'll see me wearing pearls and chains these days. They've made a comeback in the best way!"

Must-have items? "A roller brush, hair dryer and hairspray. I don't travel without them. Then naturally, several pairs of jeans, T-shirts and shoes to mix things up."

Thoughts on South African fashion? "We have some of the best designers in the world, pioneering our own unique trends. Just look at MaXhosa and Urban Zulu; they're doing fantastic things. I'm also an African-print junkie – it features regularly when I attend events."

Any local designers in his wardrobe? "You'll find a few MaXhosa and Urban Zulu pieces, of course. But most of my locally made clothes have been commissioned from unknown designers. I believe this bespoke approach is the way to go."

Image: Nick Boulton

Thoughts on embracing diversity in fashion? "My two years abroad helped me expand my mind. I love gender-neutral clothing; it's crucial that people can express themselves through fashion without judgement. The reality is that pushing boundaries will help the world evolve. I don't necessarily see myself in anything like that right now because it's not my style, but who knows what I'll be wearing in five years. And it's not just about gender-neutral clothing – fashion should be inclusive in its diversity. Race, size, colour, etc. should never limit what's created."

Finally, what's next? "I want to be a successful entrepreneur with freedom to be able to live anywhere. South Africa will always be my home base, but I want to experience our vast world, its people and cultures."

A true trailblazer since 14, Shahan Ramkissoon is a shining example of success achieved through conquering boundaries and challenging the status quo, combined with good old-fashioned hard work. Learn more about Shahan's storytelling at feelsa.co.za or follow him on Instagram: @shahanramkissoon D

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TEXT: SAMARIE SMITH-MELETIOU DipWSET

WINE

RACONTEUR WITH A CELLAR THAT SOOTHES THE SOUL

Images: Supplied; unsplash.com

South Africa is an adored wine country whose whole value chain, from growing grapes to harvesting the ripe fruit and producing stellar wines, forms a part of its story. But that's just it – the story needs to be told for wineries to sell their wines! Meet **Ed Beukes**, Marketing and Export Manager of DTK Wines, but an even better storyteller and wine drinker himself.

Winemaking as a career sounds like the most romantic vocation – reaping the fruit ripened by a quintessential set of factors determined by nature and guided by those destined to be winemakers. However, it requires a storytelling talent that entices consumers to buy wine and keep this courtship of nature and man alive.

Ed Beukes is such a raconteur, exuding creativity and optimism, who, in his own words, thrives on commitment, control and challenge. As wine often trickles its serendipitous magic across a wine lover's path, seeking small-town serenity outside the Mother City five years ago led to Ed's full-time position at DTK Wines in Rawsonville.

Consumers became acquainted with the name Du Toitskloof Wines, which started as a cooperative in 1962 and continues its bottled legacy in many households. Now celebrating its 60th birthday, the company also toasts to three decades of adding premium and other innovative brands to their stable, which is now collectively known as DTK.

"My position has metamorphosised over the last five years, but I believe I've played a strategic and creative role in rebranding and repositioning DTK's brands (Du Toitskloof, Land's End and Quest)," Ed explains.

"It is so rewarding to see initiatives and projects come to fruition. The challenging part is to explain to your team what the picture of a 1 000-piece puzzle looks like when you only have three pieces in your hand to show them, which is why I am grateful to be working for a company with visionary leaders at the helm."

Ed reminisces on the days of travelling to his favourite international wine destination, traversing the countryside of Montepulciano, Italy, with his wife. Still, he chuckles when he explains how hard it is to balance your love for travel with parenthood and a demanding job. "I am grateful to my wife, who always supports me in pursuing that balance. Choosing your priorities and setting your life up accordingly is essential. When I work on sizeable projects, I burn the midnight oil. When my children are awake, I am theirs and theirs alone. I believe in being present in the moment and giving myself wholeheartedly to the task or person that requires my attention."

As a wine creative, the DTK Tasting Room always attracts him, buzzing with people from all walks of life curious to explore the result of what started in the soil. "My favourite part about the Tasting Room is using it as a platform to challenge perception and to inspire. There's nothing more thrilling than conducting a blind tasting – facilitating the process where guests need to depend on their senses. Nothing beats listening to them sharing thoughts, opinions, likes and dislikes in the absence of labels or price. I find this vulnerable and transparent process quite beautiful."

In November 2022, DTK launched its first art exhibition at the winery and collaborated with Marisa de Jager. "Visitors can look forward to a new art exhibition every two months, enjoyed with a complimentary glass of wine paired with the artist's style and personality. Our current exhibition (27 January – 26 March 2023) is by Madeleine du Toit (her first solo exhibition), whose day job is working as a viticulturist for DTK.

And from stalwart Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc produced under the DTK umbrella, ranking among the top sellers in South Africa, to niche varietals like Nebbiolo shooting the lights out, Ed is particular about his own selection of wines at home.

"Of course, I need to start with my choices of bubbly! One of my colleagues is a master of bubbles and produces his own brand: Alain Cajeux Brut Chardonnay Cap Classique. I love having this bubbly at hand, as it isn't heavy or overly yeasty and is super-fresh with a tangy character of lemon-meringue-meets-padstal-pears. Another favourite in my cellar is the legendary Graham Beck NV Brut Rosé."

With plenty of balmy evenings ahead, the Du Toitskloof's Pinotage Rosé is a firm favourite in the Beukes household. "It was awarded Double Gold at the Rosé Rocks Awards, and although aromas of candyfloss and sweet cherries leap from the glass, the wine is dry with a lingering taste of sour strawberries and sweet Fizzers. The other rosé I would serve any day for an elegant lunch is the L'Avenir Glenrosé. The packaging is sleek, and Pinotage certainly acts the part in this complex wine."

Naturally, Chenin Blanc takes a bow regarding his selection of white wines. "My whites would include my colleague and friend, Willie's, Quest Old Vine Chenin Blanc 2020 produced by DTK – a stunning oaked Chenin Blanc of which some components were aged in amphora clay pots. The wine is elegant and full-bodied, with citrus and dried peach characteristics. My second choice would also hail from the Breedekloof Valley – the Badsberg Sur Lie Chardonnay. My wife and I buy cases of this, not bottles, and we love the balance of butterscotch and bright fruit."

If the Breedekloof is your home, you choose reds to chill down in summer, which suit the South African outdoorsy lifestyle. "How can I not include the Du Toitskloof Nebbiolo 2020? There are not many producers bottling this Italian variety as a single cultivar wine, and the aim was to create a wine

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bursting with flavour, backed with smooth and gentle tannins, that drinks just as well when chilled. I'm a big fan. For my other red, I also keep it in the neighbourhood. My friend Ivy at Jason's Hill makes a darn fine unwooded Cinsault. This wine is fresh and delightful, always a summer hit among friends."

As South Africans, we are very entrepreneurial and can adapt and create, and Ed believes that wine and the quality produced in South Africa reflects this.

"These are amazing strengths to have. We have remained relevant in ever-changing times with onerous economic predictions and volatile markets. If we continue to produce quality wines, share our stories of sustainability, and stand together as brand South Africa, we are only going one way, which is up!" D

Images: Supplied by Lejwe La Metsi

Where the water heals

Tucked away in the foothills of Bela-Bela, you will find a luxury reserve known as Lejwe La Metsi. You may not have heard of it, but once you visit, it's a place you won't soon forget.

TEXT: LIESL FRANKSON

An aerial view of the Lejwe La Metsi landscape.

Above: We came face to face with a herd of buffalo. Opposite, from left: The villas are a luxurious home away from home; Oom Piet is more than just a member of staff — he's family; Every now and then a new waterfall pops up at Lejwe La Metsi.

With a rich history and a heart-warming mission, Lejwe is unlike any other game lodge I've stayed at. In fact, it's anything but a traditional luxury game lodge, which is what made it so appealing to me.

Located only 90 minutes from Johannesburg, the trip to Lejwe is relatively straightforward, but as fate would have it, I landed up on an unplanned detour that saw me arrive at the reserve almost an hour after my expected check-in time. By the time I pulled up to the main gate, I was a bundle of mixed emotions, but the warm welcome I received from property manager Sarita Eicker and her team instantly neutralised any travel-related anxiety I was experiencing.

As we made our way through the check-in process and the property, I was struck by how vast it was. As the only lodge on just over 2 500 hectares of breathtaking Waterberg landscape, Lejwe is redefining the term exclusive. The property features five spacious villas and only accommodates a maximum of 36 guests at a time.

We crossed the immaculately landscaped gardens and headed towards my villa as a gentle breeze passed through the trees creating the kind of sound effect you would only hear in the background of a meditation app. Across the lawn and behind some lush shrubbery stood a beautiful structure held up by columns, which looked straight out of a lost land like Atlantis or Lemuria.

A SENSE OF HOME

As we stepped onto the veranda and into the villa, I was once again pleasantly surprised by the grand scale of everything. The ceiling in the living area felt as though it stretched upwards forever, which was confirmed by the fact that the biggest mirror I've ever seen rested comfortably on one of the walls reflecting everything in the room.

Despite the vastness of the space, it still felt cosy. Maybe this was part of the illusion with the giant mirror or maybe it was the stone fireplace and warm décor, but somehow this villa with the grandiose façade felt very homely.

If fate had been unfair earlier in the day by taking me on an unplanned detour, she made up for it as I was led to my room in the villa. Continuing the go-big-or-go-home theme, the master suite did not disappoint. The room was simply furnished with tasteful pieces that allowed you to take in the wall-to-wall lush green garden views.

My favourite features in the room were undoubtedly the palatial-style bathroom and dressing room, and with everything built from marble, I was very appreciative of the fact that the room included a fireplace to help keep the winter chill at bay. It's worth noting, however, that the villa is built from marble because marble acts as a cooling stone and therefore naturally cools the villa down during the hot Bela-Bela summers.

A CUSTOM MOMENT

Sarita soon left me to my own devices but not for too long as lunch was on the cards. I made my way out of the villa to join the rest of the group, and we learnt that lunch would be a little different. This is where Lejwe deviates from the norm. The lodge prides itself on its ability to adapt and provide guests with custom experiences.

Where most luxury game lodges have an established offering and way of doing things, Lejwe leaves the possibilities of the stay open to the guest, which is something I found very appealing. "Some guests check in and we don't see them around the main area again until they check out," Sarita explained. "It all depends on what the guests want; we often set up meals for guests at the villa or surrounds."

> { Throughout the property, you will find spots where water pushes up from underground. It's 100% pure and you can drink it.

With so much wide-open space, greenery and sunshine to behold, lunch indoors was not an option and my villa mate and I had a beautiful picnic-style lunch under some trees in front of our villa. We chitchatted lazily on the lawn, munching away on the tasty selection of food that had been prepared especially for our picnic. We were both partial to some mushroom toast that had been included in the platter, so much so that we unsuccessfully tried to get the recipe from the chef.

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

As our lazy lunch came to an end, our group reconvened at the main area for an afternoon game drive. We were led on our expedition by Oom Piet who has been working on the property for well over 20 years. Piet's house was one of the first structures to be built on the property and his love for the bush, animals and the mission of the reserve is clear in the way he speaks about the property.

From undulating hills and rocky outcrops to vast grasslands and thick bushveld, Lejwe is home to a variety of wildlife, and we were fortunate enough to have met a few curious critters on our game drive. A standout moment for me was an encounter with a majestic male Zambezi sable antelope who put on a display of his dominance among the females in his herd. Keenly aware of the presence of visitors, he kept the curious members of the herd in line with his scimitar-shaped horns, ensuring everyone knew exactly who was in charge out here.

As we watched his display, the owner explained the impact hunting has had on the species. "Many of the animals and the colour variants you'll see on the reserve were all naturally occurring years ago, but because these specific colour variants occurred naturally in so few numbers, trophy hunters would go for them first. This essentially wiped out the bloodlines and now we're on a mission to try and undo that damage and conserve what we have."

"We've committed our space and expertise to protecting some of these unique bloodlines." This is something the whole team is committed to and believes in. Some team members, like Oom Piet, have even become vegetarian because of their passion for protecting these animals.

After many more memorable encounters with the animals, we paused for a drink stop to watch the sun splash warm pink and orange hues across the sky as it began to set.

ROCK OF WATER

Waking up at Lejwe La Metsi in the winter was refreshing to say the least. After a luxurious start to the day, I made my way out of the villa and was met with a cool crisp blast of fresh air. Our mission for the day, for those who were keen, was a hike up the mountainside to a recently discovered waterfall.

As we meandered up the rocky terrain, Oom Piet explained that Lejwe La Metsi means Rock of Water and that the entire property sits atop underground water springs. "Throughout the property, you will find spots where water pushes up from underground. It's 100% pure and you can drink it," he explained.

We reached the top of the mountain and looked down at the property below. It was tiny, and for the first time I realised how high up we had gone. There was a sense of peace here, looking over what seemed like the whole of Bela-Bela.

Suddenly I thought of Oom Piet's words, and everything started to make sense. From the moment I arrived on the property, it was as if all my worries had been washed away. All the sages of the ages will tell you that water has healing properties.

Not only does it help sustain us – healing both our minds and our bodies – but spending time in and around water can help improve our mood and reconnect us with nature. With the smell of water lingering in the air all throughout the property at Lejwe La Metsi, it's no wonder the trip left me feeling both relaxed and reinvigorated. D

The natural outdoor boma is the perfect location for stargazing.

TURNING YOUR HOME INTO A SMART HOME

There are many simple, efficient and easy-to-use appliances that make your home smarter, more secure and more comfortable.

TEXT: STAFF WRITER

Images: Gallo Images/Getty Images

Turning your home into a smart home is no longer a futuristic idea – the smart home market is growing rapidly all over the world. In South Africa, homeowners are moving quickly towards installing cutting-edge technology to make their lives easier, healthier and more energy efficient.

Once expensive and out of reach for the everyday homeowner, smart home products have become more accessible, cost-effective and user-friendly.

The definition of smart homes has also evolved to not only include voice-controlled, automated houses. There are many simple, efficient and easy-to-use appliances that make your home smarter, more secure and more comfortable, says Trevor Brewer, Director of Solenco, a lifestyle technology manufacturer and importer. “Homeowners can start with smaller, less expensive items to turn their homes into smarter, easier and healthier places to live. These items not only save money in the long run, but they also look after the overall health and wellbeing of homeowners.”

START ON YOUR SMART HOME TECHNOLOGY JOURNEY

SMART LIGHTBULBS

There are LED bulbs on the market that allow you to run them from your smartphone. LED bulbs are better for the environment, safer and save money. LEDs emit almost no forward heat while traditional bulbs convert more than 90% of the total energy used to power them directly into heat. Additionally, because LEDs consume less power, they can operate effectively on low-voltage electrical systems.

ROBOTIC VACUUMS

Besides the obvious benefit of not having to vacuum, advanced robot vacuums allow you to clean your house when you are not at home and they are easily managed through a smartphone app. Brewer says when purchasing a robot vacuum, take into consideration room size, mapping and mopping technology, type of surface to be cleaned, battery life, noise level and scheduling.

AIR PURIFIERS

These devices tackle the threats that we can’t necessarily see but that we breathe on a daily basis – an element of health that can’t be ignored following a global pandemic and a frequent poor air quality index in cities like Johannesburg. “There are several different types of air purifiers that use filtration mechanisms to remove toxins and airborne viruses from the air,” says Brewer. “Look out for those that are medical grade and offer multi-stage filtration to capture the smallest of airborne particles from pollution, allergens and viruses to pollen, dust, smoke and pet dander.”

A SMART ALARM SYSTEM

This allows you to be in control of your home’s security. Your alarm can be enabled and disabled remotely, meaning you don’t have to be in your home to set your alarm. There are many smart alarm systems that can be configured from a tablet or smartphone. These alarms can also be connected to home appliances that can be controlled remotely, as well as CCTV cameras that monitor the inside and outside of the home.

> “Start with smaller, less expensive items that not only save money in the long run, but also look after the overall health and wellbeing of homeowners.”

KEYLESS ENTRY

Never worry about losing your keys again. Keyless locks can be used with a variety of devices and will provide you with smart security for your keyless home, while enhancing its aesthetics. You can access the lock from anywhere, control it with voice, use it with different devices and enable automation. You can see who came, went, at what time, and send your digital keys to your family and friends quickly if they need to get into your home. D

WHAT YOU CAN'T CLAIM FROM YOUR CAR INSURANCE

Know what your car insurance does and doesn’t protect to avoid that sinking feeling of claiming and finding out that you are not covered.

TEXT: STAFF WRITER

Car insurance is there to cushion you against the financial losses associated with unpleasant and unforeseen events, such as the theft of your vehicle, an accident that causes damage to your vehicle, and you accidentally damaging someone else’s property.

Most people who understand what their car insurance covers and follow the terms and conditions of their policy have a good experience when it comes time to claim. However, there are also some misconceptions about what car insurance will cover and what it won’t.

Ernest North, Co-founder of digital insurance platform Naked, lists a few of the eventualities that are excluded from car insurance.

MAINTENANCE AND WEAR-AND-TEAR

Your car loses its shine the more you use it. Components like brake pads, windscreen wipers and tyres get worn out and need to be replaced. Exposure to the weather can leave the paintwork looking faded and shabby. And mechanical and electrical parts can fail as they age. These issues are not covered in your car insurance. Some of these may be covered by your vehicle’s warranty or the service plan, but your comprehensive car insurance policy only covers damage from sudden, unforeseen events that involve impact with or by an external object or force.

UNAUTHORISED AND UNDISCLOSED USES OF THE CAR

Most personal car insurance policies will not cover you when you use your car for purposes such as leisure racing or being an Uber driver. If you’re planning to take your car for a spin around a racetrack, you might want to check if you’ll be covered in the event something happens. If you are going to be transporting people or goods around in your vehicle as part of your job, you would need to get a commercial insurance policy. The reason for this is that the risks are different, so commercial policies will be more expensive.

UNAUTHORISED DRIVERS

This varies by insurance company, but some insurers have strict policies about whether they will pay out a claim if someone who isn’t listed on your policy has an accident in your car. Read your policy carefully and ask your insurer if you need to name each person who drives your car.

DAMAGE CAUSED WHILE DOING SOMETHING ILLEGAL

Car insurance policies will generally not cover you when you have an accident while you’re doing something illegal. Examples include driving your car in an unroadworthy condition, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, speeding or reckless driving, driving with an invalid driver’s licence, or leaving the scene of the accident unlawfully.

FALSE OR UNDISCLOSED INFORMATION

Your car insurance may not pay out if there are any falsehoods in the details you provided about yourself or your car when buying insurance. Your claim will also be rejected if you didn’t tell the whole truth in your accident report.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS DAMAGED OR STOLEN FROM YOUR CAR

Car insurance generally only covers the car and the damage it can cause to other people’s property. You will need to purchase separate single item or home insurance cover to insure items like your camera, notebook or smartphone.

MONEY YOU OWE THE BANK AFTER YOUR CAR HAS BEEN WRITTEN OFF OR STOLEN

Your car insurance may only cover the value of the car at the time of a theft or accident, and not the amount you still need to pay off. You can get shortfall cover to pay for any outstanding debt on your car, but it’s not included by default.

GETTING THE RIGHT COVER

One of the benefits of the emerging era of transparent, online insurance transactions – with the cover explained clearly on a provider’s website or app – is that it’s easier for consumers to familiarise themselves with the details of their cover and to get the right policies and insurance products for their needs. D

Images: Gallo Images/Getty Images

Privilege, thy name is Dubai

TEXT: CANDICE LANDIE

I've never related to privilege. On my father's side of the family, my generation are the first college graduates. We are the generation building a substratum for our children and enabling them to do the same for their children. Prior to us, my dad, his parents and grandparents were not educated. They were the epitome of working class in South Africa. School was secondary; earning money came first. On my mother's side of the family, scandalous affairs ran so deep, it's hard to separate truth from fiction, so I have little knowledge of the generational lines.

I understand that money and status are not the only factors that define privilege because we didn't just battle poverty; we also battled the elements associated with poverty. I grew up around alcohol abuse, violence and gangs. My paternal grandmother was a shebeen queen and she ran a Friday night gambling school. I've seen her arrested by the police more times than a kid should. She was our warrior. My maternal grandmother was a warrior, too, but in a different sense. She had faith like Abraham. Her prayers held our families together.

As for me, I am a spiritual hustler. I like to think I inherited the best of both worlds. If something new presents itself, I'll pray about it, say yes to the challenge, and then figure out the rest as I go along. This is exactly what happened when I got the opportunity to move to Dubai.

With the Netflix series *Dubai Bling* on everyone's radar, there is a perception of life in Dubai. Glamorous, exotic, expensive. I can tell you a few things for certain: Dubai is an expensive city, plastic surgery is big business, and the land has no natural beauty. Like the silicon-riddled real housewives, everything in this city is manmade and the further away you drive from key locations, the more you are greeted by open stretches of sand, dust and rocks. As modern as Dubai may be, the UAE is an Arab country and there are rules you must abide by. Homosexuality is forbidden and being drunk and disorderly in public could very well get you deported. Unless a man and woman are legally married, they can't live together as partners.

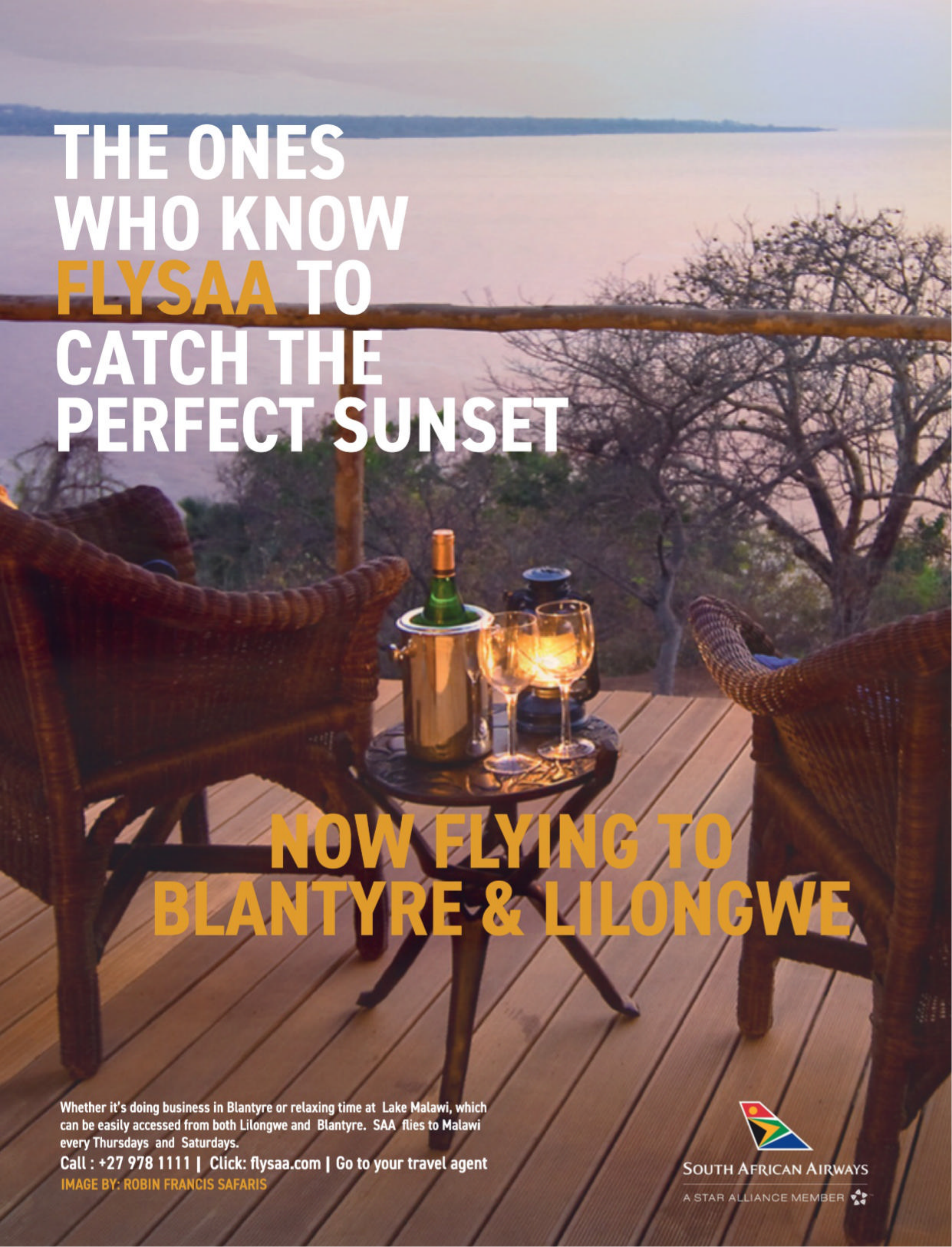
Restrictions aside, the one thing that is admirable in Dubai is work ethic. I've never seen people work so hard or have so much respect for their government. I heard a phrase at an expo I attended, which said that New York may be the city that never sleeps, but Dubai is the city that never stops dreaming. Having only lived here for six months, I get it. This is a city that uses New Year's Eve as a reason to set new Guinness records. World's tallest, world's highest, world's largest, world's first – good is not good enough. People here swear by the quote of HH Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE: "The race for excellence has no finish line." So much so, that I was taught this during orientation (and I don't work for the government).

It is in Dubai that I am beginning to understand privilege. I don't worry about getting into a cab alone or walking home at 2am with my girlfriends after a night out. I don't worry about taxes or long queues at the hospital. I don't worry about rushing home to cook so I can beat the loadshedding schedule. I don't worry about owning a private car because public transport is accessible and safe. I don't worry about exorbitant interest rates on my credit card. I don't worry about whether my sons will find work post university. Privilege, I'm learning, is about access to opportunity.

Yes, this is a city filled with superficialities, but it is also extremely welcoming. Unlike London where you must jump through hoops to get a tourist visa, Dubai's flexible visa options are growing every year, including residence visas for freelancers, as the city is looking to attract more artists and content creators. About 86% of this city consists of expats from more than 105 nationalities, so there's little fear of feeling displaced. The country has diversified its global portfolio exponentially, so that today, only 31% of the UAE's economy relies on its oil.

If you do get the opportunity to call Dubai your home, even temporarily, to you I say yalla, habibi! It's great on this side of the fence. D

Image: Supplied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